The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs

An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria



BY

YARON FRIEDMAN

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PREFACE

This monograph offers research on the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs, covering a variety of aspects. The absence of such research since Dussaud's *Histoire et religion des Nosairīs* (1900) demands a new comprehensive study. The aim of this book is to review the history and religion of the sect in the light of old documents used by orientalists in the nineteenth century, documents that became available in the twentieth century, and later sources of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī sect published most recently in Lebanon. Another goal here, not dealt with in Dussaud's book, is to study the question of the identity of the sect through the ʿAlawī-Sunnī-Shīʿī triangle.

A consistent endeavor has been made to keep the research for this book as objective as possible. Notwithstanding the claim of objectivity by Western scholars, they have a tendency to repeat the orthodox Sunnī point of view concerning the identity of sects.[1] Western publications tend to refer to the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs as heretics, although the members of the sect consider themselves to be Muslims. The use of the term "sect" is neither pejorative nor in opposition to "the church", as suggested by Max Weber.[2] Many criticisms have been raised against its use as a translation of the Arabic *firqa* (pl. *firaq*). Marshall Hodgson, for example, explains that Weber's definition is based on his study of the Christian church, which differs from Islamic orthodoxy in many ways.[3] Michael Cook holds that Weber's explanation that the sect is non-political and non-hierarchic is wrong when applied to Muslim sects and Shīʿī groups in particular.[4] Although these criticisms are valid, Cook and Hodgson do not propose an alternative translation for the term *firqa*. Hence, our

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[1] As Hodgson noted: "Islamists, both Muslim and Western, have had a way of absorbing the point of view of orthodox Islam; this has gone so far that Christian Islamists have looked with horror on Muslim heretics"; see M.G. S. Hodgson, "How did the early Shīʿa become sectarian?", *JAOS* 75 (1955), p. 5.

[2] M. Weber, "Sect, church and democracy", in M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), vol. 2, ch. 9.

[3] M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 66–67.

[4] M. Cook, "Weber and Islamic sects", in: T. E. Huff and W. Schluchter (eds), *Max Weber and Islam* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1999), pp. 273–280.

consideration of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs as a sect follows Heinz Halm's view that Weber's definition or parts of it could be appropriate for such sects as the Druzes but not for the Shīʿa: "a small number of adherents, lack of state recognition, spontaneous confession and freedom to join or not join, members' awareness that they belong to a religious separate qualified elite".[5] In my opinion, this selective definition also fits the Nuṣayrī sect. In Arabic, the word *firqa* usually has a negative connotation, while *ṭāʾifa* is used in a positive sense, but not necessarily in every case.

Since the sacred writings of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs are kept secret by the members of the sect because of their sensitivity, it is important to note that the religious material used in this volume is only that which is accessible in public libraries and printed books. My research did not involve private sources and libraries, or personal manuscripts belonging to members of the sect. Moreover, I believe that a true understanding of the available material is limited to the external level that a non-ʿAlawī can reach. A profound grasp of these writings can be achieved only by the sect's mystical shaykhs.

I owe a special dept of gratitude to Professor Kais Firro of the University of Haifa, who backed this project and made valuable suggestions. I wish to thank my friend and colleague, Dr. David Cook, without whom the newest and the most important sources for this study would not have been accsessible. He contributed to the improvement of my previous research, by reading early drafts of my two articles and adding important notes. I also owe a special debt to Mrs. Rebecca Toueg and to Margaret Owen for their rigorous editing of the manuscript.

The present work is a result of a research process that began in 1995 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I was first introduced to the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī doctrine and history by Dr. Meʾir M. Bar-Asher, an authority in the field. During these studies, I initiated my first original research in the field, focusing on al-Khaṣībī, the actual founder of the sect and a key figure for the understanding of the sect's identity. This research yielded an article[6] that is used in this book with some additions and improvements. The enlargement of the research into a study of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī identity between Sunna and Shīʿa, including medieval and modern aspects, was enabled thanks to a doctoral scholarship granted by the

[5] H. Halm, *Shiism*, trans J. Watson, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 2.

[6] Y. Friedman, "Al-Ḥusayn ibn Hamdān al-Khaṣībī: A historical biography of the founder of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīte sect", *Studia Islamica* 93 (2001), pp. 91–112.

French government in 2001–2003 at the Sorbonne Paris IV University. I was guided with devotion by Professor Paul Fenton, an expert on Jewish and Islamic mysticism, whose vast knowledge contributed to its completion. This study, entitled *Les Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs entre Sunna et Shīʾa: refus et acceptation selon les sources arabes médiévales et modernes*,[7] was completed in 2006. It was approved (*très honorable*) by the jury, which was headed by Professor Muhammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and consisted of Professor Fenton, Professor Burhan Ghalioun and Dr. Stéphane Valter.[8] Professor Moshe Maoz and Professor Eyal Zisser, experts in Syrian politics, were external judges of the thesis. With numerous additions and some corrections, the thesis served as a basis for several parts of this book. I wish to thank all the above-mentioned scholars for their support and encouragement of my research. Most of their important notes concerning my doctorate were considered carefully in the actual research. The book includes another recent article on the most famous Sunni decree concerning the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī sect.[9]

I am grateful to Dr. Reuven Amitai and Dr. Isaac Hasson from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who aided me in completing my research through their encouragement and recommendations as well as their methodological guidance and teaching. I also wish to thank Professor Moshe Sharon from the Hebrew University to whom I owe my background in medieval Shīʿism.

I would like to acknowledge the help of institutions which gave me access to some of the rare and important documents used in this volume: the National Library at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the University of Haifa library, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, and the John Rylands Library in Manchester.

Last but not least, my thanks are due to my wife Dorit and my children Itamar, Noa, and Michal who supported me with patience through the long days of study.

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[7] The actual location of the final version of the doctoral thesis is the Bibliothèque Serpente—Université Sorbonne Paris IV.

[8] The thesis defence took place at Sorbonne Paris IV, 27 February 2006.

[9] Y. Friedman, "Ibn Taymiyya's fatāwā against the Nusayrī-ʿAlawī sect", *Der Islam*, 82:2 (2005), pp. 349–363.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following list includes all the available sources of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī sect, with their abbreviations as used in this book, in alphabetical order. Hitherto, two articles aimed to sum up the available Nuṣayrī bibliography. The first was published by Catafago (1876) and the second by Massignon (1938).[1] This list is an updated bibliography of the sect, including the location of sources and their previous catalogue references (Cat). For a detailed list of primary sources including information about their contents and reliability, see Appendix 1.

AAM *Ādāb ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib*/Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Nakhaʿī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī[2] VI, 261–287. Cat: Massignon item 10 attributes it to Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar.

AAN *Kitāb al-akwār wa-'l-adwār al-nūrāniyya*/Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī I, 33–205. Cat: Catafago item 10; Massignon item 14.

AUH *Kitāb al-anwār wa-'l-ḥujub*/Muḥammad ibn Sinān (attributed)
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī VI , 65–94. Cat: Massignon item 9.

ARM *Akhbār wa-riwāyāt ʿan mawālīnā ahl al-bayt minhum al-salām*
Ms Hamburg 303.[3] Cat: Massignon item 44.

BD *al-Baḥth wa-'l-dalāla*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II spread in *RR* and *FRR*. Cat: Catafago item 12; Massignon item 49.

BI *Kitāb al-bidʾ wa-'l-iʿāda*/al-Ḥusayn ibn Hārūn al-Baghdādī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī VI, 425–472.

BS *Kitāb al-bākūra al-Sulaymāniyya*/Sulaymān al-Adhanī

[1] J. Catafago, "Nouvelles mélanges", *Journal Asiatique* 4 (1876), pp. 523–525; L. Massignon, "Esquisse d'une bibliographie nusayrie", *Opera Minora* I (1936), pp. 640–649. Catafago's list is more detailed in Dussaud's bibliography (1900), which sums up the Western research concerning the Nuṣayrīs until his time. See R. Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairīs* (Paris: Librairie Emile Bouillon, 1900), pp. XIII–XXXV.

[2] This book is discussed in the Introduction: Abū Mūsā and Sheikh Mūsā, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī: rasāʾil al-ḥikma al-ʿAlawiyya*, 6 vols. (Diyār ʿAql: Dār min ajl al-maʿrifa, 2006).

[3] See critical edition, *Akhbār wa riwāyāt ʿan mawālīnā ahl al-bayt minhum al-salām*, in R. Strothmann, "Esoterische Sonderthemen bei den Nusairi: Geschichte und Traditionen von den Heiligen Meistern aus dem Prophetenhaus", *Abhandungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958).

Printed in Beirut, appeared in 1864 according to E. E. Salisbury, *JAOS* 8 (1866) without place or date; reprinted corruptly by Dār al-Saḥwa li-'l-Nashr, Cairo, in 1990. Includes *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*. Cat: Catafago item 20; Massignon item 24 (wrong attribution of the anonymous *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* to al-Khaṣībī).

DKH *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī*/al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī

Ms. Manchester 452 fol. 1a–140b. Cat: Catafago item 25; Massignon item 23.

DMA *Dīwān al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī*

Ms. Manchester 452 fol. 122a–214b. Cat: Massignon item 80.

DMM *Kitāb al-dalāʾil fī maʿrifat al-masāʾil*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

Ms. Hamburg 304 fol. 141a–207b; *Silsilat al-turāth* al-ʿAlawī III, 117–156. Cat: Catafago item 5 as *Kitāb al-dalāʾil fī maʿrifat al-rasāʾil*; Massignon item 43.

DMS *Dīwān al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī*

Printed in Asʾad a. ʿAli, *Maʿrifat Allāh wa-'l-Makzūn al-Sinjārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Rāʾid al-ʿArabī, 1972), text in vol. 2, pp. 265–304. Cat: Catafago, item 32; Massignon item 81.

FRR *Fiqh al-risāla al-rāstbāshiyya*/al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī

Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, 83–156.

HA *Kitāb al-haft wa-'l-aẓilla*/al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar (attributed)

Printed in Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāthulīkiyya, 1969, Arif Tamir ed., 1969. Cat: Catafago item 1; Massignon item 5.

HAD *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn*/al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī

Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī IV, pp. 11–179. Cat: Catafago item 9 as *Kitāb al-ḥaqāʾiq*; Massignon item 63 attributed to Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī.

HAIH *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif fī ithbāt al-ḥaqq ʿalā 'l-mubāyin wa-'l-muḥālif* / ʿAlī ibn Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī

Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī IV, 240–285. Cat: Catafago item 4; Massignon item 61 attributed to Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī.

HIF *Kitāb al-ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī III, pp. 45–116. Cat: Catafago item 22 as *Kitāb al-ḥāwī fī wājibāt al-tilmīdh*; Massignon item 42.

HK *Kitāb al-hidāya al-kubrā*/al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī

Printed in Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Balāgh, 1986. Cat: Massignon item 21.

HUA *Kitāb al-ḥujub wa-'l-anwār* /Muḥammad ibn Sinān (attributed)

Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī VI, pp. 19–64. Cat: Catafago item 14.

IM *Kitāb īḍāḥ al-miṣbāḥ*/ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān al-Junbulānī

Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī I, 236–299. Cat: Catafago item 18; Massignon item 16.

JK *al-Jawhariyya al-kalbiyya*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī III, pp. 19–40. Cat: Catafago item 38 as *al-Jawhariyya*; Massignon item 50 as *al-Jawāhir*.

KBS *Kitāb bāṭin al-ṣalāt*/Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, 219–272. Cat: Catafago item 36; Massignon item 31.

KHA *Kitāb ḥāwī ʾl-asrār*/Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, 157–217.

KHC *Khuṭba* and Catechism
Ms. Kiel 19; Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 5188. Cat: Massignon item 121.

KM *Kitāb al-maʿārif* /Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Ms. Hamburg 304, fol. 1a–126b. Cat: Massignon item 47.

KMA *Kitāb al-mashyakha*
English extracts available in S. Lyde, *Asian Mystery Illustrated in the History, Religion, and Present State of the Ansaireeh or Nusairis of Syria* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), pp. 233–269. Cat: Massignon item 124.

KS *Kitāb al-ṣirāt* /al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar (attributed)
Ms. Paris 1450, fol. 80a–182a; *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* VI, 95–166. L. Capezzone, "Il *Kitāb al-Ṣirāṭ* attribuito a Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar al-Guʿfi. Edizione del ms. unico (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale) e studio introduttivo", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 69 (1995), pp. 295–416. Cat: Catafago item 16; Massignon item 1 attributed to al-Mufaḍḍal.

KT *Kitāb al-tamḥīṣ*/al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī V, pp. 319–348. Cat: Massignon item 62 attributed to Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī.

KU *Kitāb al-usūs* /al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar (attributed)
Ms. Paris 1449, fol. 1a–79b; Cat: catafago item 8; Massignon item 3 attributed to al-Mufaḍḍal without references.

MA *Kitāb majmūʿ al-aʿyād*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Edited by R. Strothmann in *Der Islam* 27 (1944–1946); Cat: Catafago item 19; Massignon item 41.

MAHS *Masāʾil ʿAbdallāh ibn Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh*
Ms. Paris 1450, fol. 48b–51b; *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* IV, pp. 191–194 as *Masāʾil Ibn Hārūn ilā ʾl-Shaykh al-Khaṣībī*; M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 107–109.[4]

MB *Masāʾil Bayrūt*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī III, 203–205. Cat: Massignon item 56 (?).

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[4] M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

MHAD *Risāla mūḍiḥat ḥaqāʾiq al-asrār*/al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī IV, pp. 181–185.

MHIS *Masāʾil Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī*/al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī IV, pp. 187–190.

MKH *al-Masāʾil al-khāṣṣa*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī III, 195–202. Cat: Massignon item 56 (?).

MN *Munāẓarat Shaykh al-Nashshābī*
Ms. Paris 1450, fol. 67b–155a; Cat: Massignon item 30.

MS *Kitāb al-mithāl wa-'l-ṣūra*/Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī I, 207–234. Cat: Massignon item 11.

RA *Risālat al-andiya*/Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, 331–321. Cat: Massignon item 35.

RB *Risālat al-bayān li-ahl al-ʿuqūl wa-'l-adhhān*/Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, 273–285; Ms. Paris 1540, fol. 53a–64a.

RFR *Risālat al-fatq wa-'l-ratq*/Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, 309–319. Cat: Massignon item 33.

RH *Risālat al-ḥurūf* /Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, pp. 335–339; Massignon item 36.

RHA *al-Risāla al-Ḥarrāniyya*/Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAbdī al-Numayrī/Namīrī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī IV, 305–316.

RIA *Risālat ikhtilāf al-ʿālamayn* /Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba 'l-Ḥarrānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī IV 287–303.

RM *al-Risāla al-Masīḥiyya*/Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, 287–302. Cat: Massignon item 32.

RMHM *Risāla al-munṣifa fī ḥaqīqat al-maʿrifa*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī III, 181–194.

RMU *al-Risāla al-murshida*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī III, 157–180. Cat: Catafago item 39 appeared as *Risālat al-murshid.*

RMUF *al-Risāla al-Mufaḍḍaliyya* /al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar (attributed)
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī VI, 9–18.

RN *al-Risāla al-Nuʿmāniyya* /Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, 303–308. Cat: Massignon item 55, attributes the epistle to al-Ṭabarānī.

RR *al-Risāla al-rāstbāshiyya*/al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, 15–82. Cat: Catafago item 37 appeared as *Zard bāshiyya*[5] [sic]; Massignon item 27.

RS *Risālat fī 'l-siyāqa*/al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī II, Spread in *RR* and *FRR*. Cat: Massignon item 28.

RT *Rislat al-tawḥīd*/Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Jisrī
Ms. Paris 1450, fol. 42a–48a. Cat: Massignon item 39.

RTN *Risālat tazkiyat al-nafs fī maʿrifat bawāṭin al-ʿibādāt al-khams*/al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī
Printed in Asʾad a. ʿAli, *Maʿrifat Allāh* chap. 2, 265–304. Cat: Massignon item 82.

RZB *Risālat al-ẓuhūr wa-'l-buṭūn*/Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī III, pp. 15–18. Cat: Massignon item 51.

SJ Meeting of al-Ṣāʾigh and al-Jisrī (no title)
Ms. Paris 1450, fol. 176b–179a; Cat: Massignon item 38.

SUR *Urjūza* /Shaykh ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Ṣuwayrī
MS. Manchester, 655, fol. 217b–249b. Cat: Massignon, item 34.

TA *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn*/Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib al-Ṭawīl
Printed in Lādhiqiyya (publisher missing), 1926. Cat: Massignon item 126.

TDN *Kitāb ta'līm diyānat al-Nuṣayriyya*
Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 6182. Cat: Massignon item 122.

TU *Kitāb tuḥfat al-ʿuqūl ʿan āl al-Rasūl* /al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī V, pp. 7–318; Printed in Beirut: Muʾassasat al-A'lamī lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 1969 and in Qumm: Maktabat Baṣīrātī, 1974 as *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūlʿan āl al-Rasūl.*

UK *Umm al-kitāb*/Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī (attributed)
V. Ivanov, "Notes sur *l'Umm al-Kitab* des ismaéliens de l'Asie centrale", *REI* IV (1932), pp. 419–481; "Ummu'l-Kitāb", *Der Islam* 23 (1936), pp. 1–32; trans. H. Halm, *Die Islamische Gnosis: Die Extreme Schia und die ʿAlawiten* (Zurich/Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1982), pp. 125–186 and *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī 'l-Islām* (Cologne: al-Kamel Verlag, 2003), pp. 90–135.

US *Kitāb al-uṣayfir*/Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba 'l-Ḥarrānī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī IV, pp. 195–238. Cat: Ms. Paris 1450, fol. 2a–40a; Massignon item 64.

WJAS *Waṣiyyat al-Jillī li-Abī Saʿīd*/Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī III, pp. 41–44.

[5] Moreover, the name *zard bāsh* "who turns yellow" in Persian has no logical meaning in its context.

NOTE ON CITATION, DATES AND TRANSLITERATION

Citations in the book are translated into English by the author if not otherwise noted. Book and manuscript titles appear in italics with capitals, Arabic titles appear in transliteration in italics without capitals, except for proper names. The sect is referred to as Nuṣayrīs when dealing with the Middle Ages and as ʿAlawīs when discussing the modern period. In general accounts of the sect the name Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs is used. Dates prior to the nineteenth century are given in double *hijrī*/Common Era form. Arabic transliteration follows the system used in the International Journal of Middle East Studies with contraction of the article (al- and 'l) and *tāʾ marbūṭa* indicated only in the construct state.

INTRODUCTION

I.

The study of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī sect in Syria is an essential part of the research concerning sects in Islam in general, as well as of the understanding of the evolution of Shīʿism in particular. Until the 1970s, research concerning the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs was considered a marginal issue in Middle East studies. The sect was an isolated, poor and small society, regarded in the West as a strange split from Shīʿism with minor political influence. Even the mobilization of young members of the sect in the French Troupes Spéciales could not hint at the enormous change that this sect would experience. The fact that the ʿAlawī minority—12 percent of the Syrian population—became in the 1970s the dominant sect in this country, changed the importance of this field of research. The study of the sect regained the interest of Western scholars, as reflected in the studies published by Heinz Halm and later by Meʾir M. Bar-Asher, Arieh Kofsky and others.

The importance of the sect as a political power in the modern Middle East is reflected also in the number of books dealing with its identity published in the Arab world since the 1980s. This is perhaps an extraordinary phenomenon, considering the few publications in this field published prior to the ʿAlawīs' emergence as a dominant group in Syria. However, the material in Arabic concerning the sect needs to be approached critically and cautiously, because it involves a considerable amount of hostility and apology. Nevertheless, it offers the researcher an opportunity to learn about opinions in the Muslim world and the abilities of the ʿAlawīs to integrate themselves within its society. The sources concerning the medieval period, which are the main focus of this volume, are also problematic. They contain hostility and apology as well, and their use also requires careful analysis in the evaluation of their credibility. The main instruments for such evaluation are an inter-textual criticism of the content, and a search for citations of the text concerned in other sources.

The most prominent addition of sources in the present research in comparison with previous studies is a series of Nuṣayrī sources printed recently in Lebanon:[1]

Abū Mūsā and Shaykh Mūsā (eds.)

a. *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī: rasāʾil al- ḥikma al-ʿAlawiyya*
   Book 1
   1. *Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Numayrī*; 2. *Al-Sayyid al-Jannān al-Junbulānī*
   Book 2
   3. *al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī*; 4. *Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī*
   Book 3
   5. *Abū Saʿīd Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī*
b. *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī: majmūʿat al-Ḥarrāniyyīn*
   Book 4
   1. *al-Muʾallafāt al-khāṣṣa: abnāʾ Shuʿba al-Ḥarrāniyyīn*
   Book 5
   2. *al-Muʾallafāt al-ʿāmma: abnāʾ Shuʿba al-Ḥarrāniyyīn*
c. *al-Majmūʿa al-Mufaḍḍaliyya*
   Book 6
   al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿAmr [sic] *al-Juʿfī*

The pseudonymous editor Abū Mūsā [al-Ḥarīrī], signing himself A.M.H. in the introduction, is known for his previous publications, such as *al-ʿAlawiyyūn al-Nuṣayriyyūn: baḥth fī ʾl-ʿaqīda wa-ʾl-taʾrīkh* (1980, no place or publisher). This last document, which is disseminated nowadays through bookshops outside Syria and the Internet, reveals the author's great hostility towards the sect. Nevertheless, in spite of this negative attitude, his references and citations are usually exact and based on a variety of Nuṣayrī sources available in public libraries.

Regarding the case of the actual *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*, there is no doubt that the editor's information concerning the Nuṣayrī works and the biography of their authors is baseless and lacks any references.

[1] Abū Mūsā and Shaykh Mūsā (eds. and intro.), *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī: Rasāʾil al-ḥikma al-ʿAlawiyya*, 6 vols. (Diyār ʿAql, Lebanon: Dār min Ajl al-Maʿrifa, 2006). The place and editors are fictitious: bizarrely, *diyār ʿaql* translates as "land of reason"; *dār min ajl al-maʿrifa* translates as "publishing house for the sake of knowledge".

In this light, attention should be focused only on the question of the credibility of the Nuṣayrī sources printed in the six volumes of the *Silsila*, excluding the editor's notes.

After careful reading and a comparison of the citations of these sources in other available documents of the sect, I was able to reach the definite conclusion that we are in possession of a large series of credible sources of the Nuṣayrī religion that have been unavailable until now. The editor, who does not reveal his sources for the manuscripts, printed the texts with care and accuracy in most cases. Moreover, I came to the conclusion that, regardless of the motives for their publication, these are the most important sources for the academic study of Nuṣayrī history, doctrine and identity. These texts, which certainly shed new light on the study of this sect, demand further research in the future. This book makes the first use of these medieval sources published in the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*, excluding the editors' additions and propaganda. Previously available sources of the sect are combined with and compared to the new material of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*.

II. *The Sources*

The primary sources used in the present book are a mixture of Imāmī-Shīʿī, Nuṣayrī and Sunnī sources. The Nuṣayrī sources include texts belonging to mystical Shīʿīs from Kufa (Iraq), who were considered by their rivals to be Ghulāt (exaggerators, sing. *ghālī*) because of their extreme admiration of ʿAlī (the Prophet Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law). It should be noted that the word Ghulāt is used not as a negative term, but as a definition of Shīʿī mystics who developed the esoteric Shīʿī tradition. In some cases, it is difficult to determine who the real authors of the Ghulāt literature are. In most cases it is possible only to know to whom the work is attributed. These sources include doctrines that were developed later in Nuṣayrī sources. Except for the *Umm al-kitāb* (see Appendix 1, item 1), all the Ghulāt sources were preserved by the members of the Nuṣayrī sect and served for initiation, study and prayer. A detailed description of these sources appears in Appendix 1, followed by a list of sources that are unavailable for research but that are mentioned in the Nuṣayrī literature.

III. *Note concerning the Arabic language in the Nuṣayrī sources*

The Nuṣayrī manuscripts are characterized by the use of Middle Arabic, which is a mixture of literary Arabic with the local dialect, mainly Syrian Arabic. The handwriting of the shaykhs is usually legible, but the texts contain numerous mistakes in spelling and syntax. This does not reflect the standards of the writers of the documents, who were learned scholars, but rather those of the copyists of these texts over the course of time. Following the Nuṣayrī sources throughout their history, a deterioration in the level of Arabic and a loosening of the application of the strict rules of grammar is noticeable. The explanation of this phenomenon is social: the transfer of the sect from an urban to a rural environment and from an intellectual group to a tribal society governed by a minority of semi-educated shaykhs. The poor state of the sect and its permanent state of oppression and impoverishment contributed to this deterioration. The historical circumstances that led to this change in the sect's situation are discussed in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY OF THE NUṢAYRĪS

The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs are a Muslim Shīʿī sect that split off from the major stream of the Shīʿa at the end of the ninth century. Although their doctrines represent a developed stage of syncretism, their history should be considered as part of Islamic studies.

The history of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs has been until now a marginal and undeveloped aspect in the research on the sect. Since the works of Dussaud and Massignon at the beginning of the twentieth century, publications concerning the medieval period of the sect have dealt mainly with the theological aspect (Strothmann, Halm, Bar-Asher and Kofsky, see Chapter 2). The majority of recent works in the field of history focus on the modern period, mainly since the emergence of the ʿAlawīs as a political power in Syria. This chapter aims to present as far as possible a detailed account of the history of the Nuṣayrī sect between the ninth and the fourteenth centuries. Religious matters are discussed in Chapter 3. The study combines internal and external sources (Nuṣayrī and non-Nuṣayrī, that is Sunnī and Shīʿī) in order to present a balanced and objective account of the founders of the sect, their successors, and their less known disciples. The majority of the sources offer accounts of the main founder, al-Khaṣībī. There are only fragments of information concerning the rest of the prominent figures. In general, the information gathered here is scattered in a variety of sources. The synthesis presented has been elaborated with much caution and consideration.

Before beginning the account of the founders of the Nuṣayrī sect, a few statements should be made concerning its historical origins. The Nuṣayrīs were one of the last Ghulāt sects in Iraq, and one of the few who have survived to our time. These groups of mystics were nicknamed Ghulāt by their rivals because they were seen by their contemporaries as extremist admirers of ʿAlī and his descendants. In fact, their mysticism, which was not understood by most of the Muslim community, was seen as a deification of the Imāms. This superficial understanding of the Ghulāt concept of divinity resulted in an accusation of heresy by the Muslim authorities.

Louis Massignon and Heinz Halm, authors of the relevant articles in the two editions of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, present clear evidence that the Nuṣayrī sect can be traced back to the Ghulāt of Kufa in the eighth century. Both agree that these mystics attributed their doctrines to the famous sixth Imām of the Shīʿa, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765). Massignon considers the Nuṣayrīs to be a sect preserving and developing the doctrines of the *ghālī* Abu ʾl-Khaṭṭāb,[1] leader of the Mukhammisa (admirers of the five), a sect which deified the *ahl al-bayt* (the close family of the Prophet Muḥammad). The latter were the five members of ʿAlī's family (ʿAlī, his uncle the Prophet Muḥammad, Fāṭima the daughter of Muḥammad who was ʿAlī's wife, and their two sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn).[2] Halm points at al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar (d. 180/796), author of most of the Ghulāt literature, as the major figure in the creation of Ghulāt doctrines.[3] The Nuṣayrī religion was a late development of the doctrines of both the activist Abu ʾl-Khaṭṭāb and the literary al-Mufaḍḍal. As is explained later, al-Mufaḍḍal, as opposed to Abu ʾl-Khaṭṭāb, was also considered an orthodox authority in Imāmī literature.

The majority of the Nuṣayrī traditions were transmitted by Ghulāt mystics as follows:

– eighth century: al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar (from the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq) > Muḥammad ibn Sinān >
– ninth century: > Muḥammad ibn Jumhūr/ Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Mihrān/ Ibn Shammūn/ Yaḥyā ibn Muʿīn (or Maʿīn) > Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr >
– tenth century: > Numayriyya (or Namīriyya)/Nuṣayriyya mystics, disciples of Ibn Nuṣayr.[4]

1. *Ibn Nuṣayr—"The Gate of God"*

The eponym of the Nuṣayrī sect is Abū Shuʿayb Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-ʿAbdī al-Bakrī al-Numayrī. His name refers to his lineage

[1] See: B. Lewis, "Abu ʾl-Khattāb", *EI*² I (1960), p. 134. Concerning his sect, the Khaṭṭābiyya, see W. Madelung, "Khaṭṭābiyya", *EI*² IV (1978), pp. 1132–1133.
[2] L. Massignon, "Nuṣayrī", *EI* VI (1913–1936), p. 964 ; "Esquisse", pp. 641–642.
[3] H. Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten: Die Mufaddal-Tradition der Ġulāt und die Ursprünge des Nusairiertums," *Der Islam* 55 (1977), pp. 219–236.
[4] See a detailed explanation of the transmission of the Ghulāt traditions in ibid., pp. 219–266.

from the northern Arab tribes of Banū Numayr of the ʿĀmir ibn Ṣaʿṣaʿa (ibn Bakr) confederation. The Banū Numayr, who settled along the Euphrates, were important allies of the Banū Taghlib (Ḥamdanids in the tenth century).[5] This tribal affiliation makes his sect's name Numayriyya more favorable than Namīriyya, but more indications are needed. In some sources Ibn Nuṣayr is called al-Baṣrī,[6] which indicates his place of living. We do not have information concerning the date of his death or his place of birth. Bakr may also refer to the name of his grandfather.[7] Although he was called Abū Shuʿayb, we do not know if he had a son named Shuʿayb; there is information concerning only a son named Aḥmad in Shīʿī sources.[8] It is possible that he had a son named Jaʿfar, because in one Nuṣayrī source, he was also called Abū Jaʿfar.[9] From the available sources, two figures can be drawn. For his followers, he was a charismatic leader with supernatural powers and for his rivals, a heretical imposter.

Although the sources do not give us exact dates, it is possible to establish the period of his main activity in the second half of the ninth century. According to both Shīʿī and Nuṣayrī sources, Ibn Nuṣayr claimed he was in contact with the tenth and eleventh Imāms, ʿAlī al-Hādī (d. 254/868) and Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/873).

While Shīʿī sources are hostile and limited in information, Nuṣayrī texts provide details of Ibn Nuṣayr's intimate relations with the Imāms.

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[5] ʿUmar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam qabāʾil al-ʿArab al-qadīma wa-ʾl- ḥadītha* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1978), vol. 3, pp. 1195–1196; Iḥsān al-Naṣ, *al-Qabāʾil al-ʿArabiyya ansābuhā wa-aʿlāmuhā* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 355, 361–362. Another author of the same tribe became known recently thanks to newly available sources: Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAbdī al-Namīrī, author of *al-Risāla al-Ḥarrāniyya* (*RHA*), see Appendix 1, item 31.

[6] See, for example, *HK*, p. 338. Theories concerning a Persian origin of Ibn Nuṣayr are baseless, and reflect a modern tendency to associate the sect with Iran. See, for example, M. Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press 1987), p. 318.

[7] *HK*, p. 338.

[8] Muḥammad Bākir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Wafāʾ, 1983), vol. 51, p. 328.

[9] *RR*, p. 57. According to this source he was also called Abū ʾl-Maṭālib (in *TDN*, p. 209, Abū Ṭālib), and the messianic name Abū ʾl-Qāsim, which was the Prophet Muḥammad's nickname (also in *TDN*, p. 209), because he was held to be his latest incarnation; see Chapter 2. According to Bar-Asher and Kofsky, Abū ʾl-Ḥasan and Abū Ṭālib refer to the Imām ʿAlī's own appellation (as father of Ḥasan) and that of his father; see Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 183 n. 109.

1.1 *Excommunication*

Shīʿī sources report that Ibn Nuṣayr was cursed and excommunicated twice. The first time was when he claimed that he was a prophet sent by al-Hādī, to whom he attributed divinity, and taught the doctrine of transmigration. The second time was after the death of Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, when Ibn Nuṣayr claimed he was this Imām's *bāb* (his intimate messenger). To this last argument he added his claim to represent the vanished twelfth Imām, the *mahdī* (guided one, Shīʿī messiah), occulted since 260/873. Ibn Nuṣayr's ambitions as well as his personal immoral behavior led to disaster. The *wakīl* (the Imām's representative), Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān, cursed him in public. Ibn Nuṣayr tried to prevent his excommunication by apologizing to him but was rejected. He ended his life ill and cursed by the Shīʿī community.[10] After his death three of his disciples argued that they were his successors, but they all failed to follow in his footsteps.[11] Nevertheless, according to the version of al-Khaṣībī in his *Hidāya al-kubrā*, after the death of the eleventh Imām, it was Ibn Nuṣayr who received from the vanished Imām the rescripts, letters and proofs of his sanctity (*tawqīʿāt, kutub, dalāʾil*) during the "lesser occultation". Only after Ibn Nuṣayr's death did the occulted Imām transmit them to his grandmother (the mother of Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī) and later to his "child" (disciple) Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān.[12]

1.2 *His mystical circle*

Nuṣayrī sources give a different picture of the close relations between Ibn Nuṣayr and the Imāms. They offer an account of meetings in

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[10] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 25 p. 285, 318, vol. 51 p. 367 (citing al-Ṭūsī's *Kitāb al-ghayba*). See also E. Kohlberg, "Barāʾa in Shīʿī doctrine", *JSAI* 7 (1986), p. 166. On the Nuṣayrī sources concerning Ibn Nuṣayr, see the following description of his activity.

The word *bāb* (door) in Shīʿī terminology signifies the most intimate disciple of the Imām. Ghulāt sects believed the *bāb*s received divine knowledge and powers from the Imāms. See B. Lewis, "Bāb", *EI²* I (1960), p. 832.

[11] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 51, p. 368; al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ, 1984), pp. 93–94. It is important to notice in the *Biḥār* that Abū ʾl-Naṣr Hibat Allāh reports that the *ghulūw* of Ibn Nuṣayr began only after al-ʿAskarī's death, a matter which is not clear in al-Nawbakhtī's *Firaq*.

According to the two sources, when Ibn Nuṣayr was ill and was asked who would take his place, he responded with his last strength: "to Aḥmad". According to that will, three followers considered themselves legitimate: Ibn Nuṣayr's son Aḥmad, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Mūsā ibn Furāt and Aḥmad ibn Abī ʾl-Ḥusayn ibn Bishr ibn Yazīd.

[12] *HK*, p. 367.

Samarra between the Imāms and Ibn Nuṣayr with his disciples. The older account goes back to the time of al-Hādī, concerning a meeting of Ibn Nuṣayr with some of his disciples in his house (no place is indicated). His disciples were concerned about the Caliph al-Mutawakkil's threat against the Imām that he would excavate at the sacred site of the Imām Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī in Karbalā, an act which would desecrate his tomb. Knowing of this meeting, al-Hādī called Ibn Nuṣayr and his "brothers" (his community) to attend him. When they arrived the Imām calmed them, and is said to have performed a miracle, since after the Imām recited his prayers the Caliph regretted his decision and asked for his pardon.[13] The excavation is echoed in other sources, according to which it took place in 236/850. Nevertheless, excavation work at the site did not stop as tradition suggests, and the tomb was ruined and covered with water.

Other meetings took place in the period of al-ʿAskarī. In one of them, Ibn Nuṣayr organized a religious session (*majlis*) near a palm tree in his garden in Basra, which turned into a ceremony when the Imām sent him a jar full of butter and milk. A messenger of al-ʿAskarī arrived, asking those present to plant their date kernels together in Ibn Nuṣayr's garden, promising that one tree would grow from them. One of the members of the *majlis*, Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Nakhaʿī al-Aḥmar ("The Red One"), tried to obtain kernels for himself alone.[14] This ceremony symbolized the creation of a holy community, but also demonstrates the ambition of one member from Basra, Isḥāq al-Aḥmar,

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[13] *HK*, pp. 323–324. The disciples of Ibn Nuṣayr in this meeting were:

1. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan (the transmitter of the tradition), 2. Muḥammad ibn Jundab (the leading disciple, see below), 3. ʿAlī ibn Umm al-Ruqād, 4. Fāzawiyya al-Kurdī, 5. Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Kātib (the secretary), 6. ʿAlī ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥasanī, 7. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ziyādī and 8. Wahb ibn Qārin.

[14] *HK*, pp. 338–339. The following disciples attended the ceremony:

1. Abū ʾl-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā, 2. Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭūṣī, 3. Abū ʿAbbād ibn ʿUbāda al-Baṣrī, 4. Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Nakhaʿī al-Baṣrī known as al-Aḥmar, 5. Ḥasan ibn Mundhir al-Qaysī, standing outside the *majlis*, 6. ʿAlī ibn Umm al-Ruqād, 7. Fāzawiyya al-Kurdī, 8. Muḥammad ibn Jundab, 9. Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Kunnāsī (not al-Kātib), 10. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Furāt al-Kātib (who later claimed he was Ibn Nuṣayr's successor). Most of these disciples, as well as those mentioned in the previous note were sanctified later by the sect. They are mentioned in the nineteenth-century catechism (*TDN*, p. 209). ʿUmar ibn al-Furāt and Ibn Nuṣayr are considered *bāb*s and the others are their *aytām* (these terms are explained in Chapter 2). It seems that ʿAlī ibn Umm al-Ruqād was the second most important disciple after the successor Muḥammad ibn Jundab. These last two disciples received some exclusive traditions from Ibn Nuṣayr not given to the rest of the members. See *HA*, p. 203; *HAD*, pp. 46–47.

to obtain the Imām's legitimacy to lead the community. This disloyalty of Isḥāq is the background of Nuṣayrī traditions aiming to prove that al-ʿAskarī chose Ibn Nuṣayr as his *bāb*, and rejected Isḥāq.

According to two traditions, the Imām al-ʿAskarī celebrated the Persian New Year, Nawrūz, with Ibn Nuṣayr and his community. Apart from the Nuṣayrī legendary traditions concerning the Imām's transmission of supernatural powers to his *bāb* Ibn Nuṣayr, the historical background of the rejection of Isḥāq results from his envy of and infidelity to Ibn Nuṣayr.[15]

An important part of Ibn Nuṣayr's book, entitled *al-Akwār wa-'l-adwār al-nūrāniyya*,[16] concerns his spiritual superiority over Isḥāq. In the account of a conversation between Ibn Nuṣayr and his successor Muḥammad ibn Jundab, the former tells the latter that the Imām taught him the mystery of the cycles of light and that Isḥāq, who had heard it too, was not permitted to transmit it. Muḥammad ibn Jundab responded that he acknowledged that Ibn Nuṣayr was the only authority to transmit the words of the Imām and to explain them.[17] From this account, it seems that Isḥāq took part in Ibn Nuṣayr's *majlis*, but competed over its leadership.[18]

The last available accounts concern a meeting between Ibn Nuṣayr and the Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī in Samarra, the place of the latter's imprisonment. ʿAbbāsids, who emprisoned the Imām, appear in Nuṣayrī traditions as a symbol of evil.[19] It seems that Ibn Nuṣayr had

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[15] In one tradition, the Imām ordered Ibn Nuṣayr to perform miracles. In one instance, he demanded that he resurrect a believer in China who had died a thousand years previously; *MA*, p. 180; *AAN*, p. 98.

[16] See Appendix 1, item 8.

[17] *AAN*, p. 58.

[18] The biography of Isḥāq by al-ʿAskalānī reveals interesting details concerning his activity. According to this biography, he was nicknamed *al-aḥmar* (the red one) due to his color when he oiled his body to deal with his leprosy. His followers, the Isḥāqiyya, had their center in al-Madāʾin. Al-Nawbakhtī accused him of "mad exaggeration" in the admiration of ʿAlī to the level of deification. Al-Nawbakhtī, cited by al-ʿAskalānī, attributes the *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ* to Isḥāq. The most valuable information in this biography is the mysterious visit by the Qarmaṭian leader Ibn Abī 'l-Fawāris to Isḥāq's house in Baghdad at Bāb al-Kūfa in 270/883. The conversation took place in secret and its details are unknown. The only information which Isḥāq shares with his disciples is that Ibn Abī 'l-Fawāris predicted exactly the process of his future execution by the authorities. The execution took place seven years later. See Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-A'lamī li'l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 370–373.

[19] See, for example, *ARM*, p. 18. In this source, again, the Imām al-ʿAskarī chose Ibn Nuṣayr, and rejected Isḥāq al-Aḥmar, to perform a miracle by making ʿAbbāsid troops disappear from Samarra.

a permanent circle in Samarra, led by his disciple Yaḥyā ibn Muʿīn al-Sāmarrī, who is known only from the writings of the sect. According to these sources, Yaḥyā had a group of believers (*muʾminūn*) to whom he taught the doctrines he had learnt from his catechism (*masʾala*, pl. *masāʾil*) with Ibn Nuṣayr.[20]

1.3 *The creation of a community*

The group of believers that surrounded Ibn Nuṣayr was probably larger than his ten known disciples and those he inherited from ʿUmar Ibn al-Furāt. These believers were probably the leaders of a larger group that considered Ibn Nuṣayr to be the legitimate successor of the vanished Imām. According to the earliest heresiographers, this group was named Numayriyya/Namīriyya, after the *nisba* (lineage) of Ibn Nuṣayr to the Banū Numayr.[21] According to Nuṣayrī sources, the members of this group called themselves *muwaḥḥidūn* or *ahl al-tawḥīd* (monotheists), because they believed that only by combining exoteric (*zāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*) knowledge, can complete monotheism be achieved.

The Nuṣayrī poet al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī referred to the sect of Ibn Nuṣayr as Banū Numayr/Namīr and not as Numīriyya/Namīriyya,[22] a tribal appellation rather than a sectarian one. This possible connection between the tribe of Ibn Nuṣayr and his sect may indicate the identity of his mass followers. These powerful tribal supporters, less known than the leading group, could have enabled the survival of the Nuṣayrī sect in a hostile environment. Moreover, the link between the Banū Numayr and the Ḥamdānid Banū Taghlib could explain the later

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[20] Yaḥyā ibn Muʿīn's questions to Ibn Nuṣayr and the latter's answers are mentioned in several sources; they concern the appearance of the divinity in human form (*MN*, fol. 144a), the mystical meaning of the *isrāʾ* (the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey, see *MN*, fol. 177a.; here a community of "believers" is mentioned), the mystical meaning of the martyrdom in Karbalāʾ (*MA*, p. 117; here Aḥmad, the uncle of al-Khaṣībī, heard the tradition). According to the late *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* (*BS*), Ibn Nuṣayr taught Yaḥyā a special prayer to help in situations of disaster (*BS*, pp. 7–8). Massignon claimed that this catechism was compiled in a book (Massignon, "Esquisse", item 13) that was probably lost.

[21] Shīʿī source: Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ, 1984), pp. 93–94; Sunnī source: ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna ʾl-firaq* (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1987), p. 239.

[22] *DMA*, fol. 150a, 151a, 159a, 165a–166b, 186b. See also in the later poem of Makzūn al-Sinjārī, who calls the sect *āl Numayr/Namīr, DMS*, p. 92.

migration of the sect to Aleppo in the time of al-Khaṣībī. This hypothesis is backed by the explicit mention of an alliance of the tribes Bakr and Taghlib in al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnīʾs *Dīwān*:

And Hālit is a cousin of al-Khaṣībī the exalted one/
Tomorrow everybody will scatter his grace
A generous one in amounts of noble acts and kindness/
As a rain of grace for everyone who needs
And we are cousins and there is no difference between us/
As do Bakr and Taghlib mingle in the battlefield[23]

1.4 *Financing*

There is no doubt that Ibn Nuṣayr's sect could not be maintained without strong economic backing under the hostile Sunnī–ʿAbbāsid rule. One of the Nuṣayrī texts refers to a fund owned by the Imām in Samarra from accumulated presents of his admirers. According to this tradition, a group of believers received a monthly stipend from the Imām al-ʿAskarī until the *ghayba* (occultation).[24] Nevertheless, it is not clear if it was the Nuṣayrīs who were paid in this case. Such support of the notorious Ibn Nuṣayr could have been harmful to the Imām. In general, it is not clear whether the Imāms really supported the mystical circles, morally or financially.

It seems more likely that the sect was maintained by the Banū ʾl-Furāt family.[25] Details in al-Khaṣībī's *Hidāya al-kubrā*, written a century later, support Massignon's hypothesis, which is opposed by Claude Cahen, that the Shīʿī vizier of the Caliph backed Ibn Nuṣayr.[26] According to the *Hidāya*, Aḥmad ibn al-Furāt, the secretary and relative of the vizier of the Caliph al-Muqtadir (d. 320/932), attended the circle of Ibn Nuṣayr.[27] In Nuṣayrī sources, his relative ʿUmar ibn al-Furāt is considered to be the previous *bāb* of the Imām (prior to Ibn Nuṣayr).[28] This sanctification of the Banū ʾl-Furāt by the Nuṣayrīs

[23] *DMA*, fol. 148b.
[24] *FRR*, p. 155.
[25] D. Sourdel, "Ibn al-Furāt", *EI*² III (1971), pp. 767–768.
[26] L. Massignon, "Les origines shīʿites de la famille vizirale des Banū ʾl-Furāt", in *Mélanges Godefroy-Demombines* (Cairo: 1935–45), pp. 25–29; C. Cahen, "Note sur les origines de la communauté syrienne des Nuṣayris", *REI* 38 (1970), pp. 243–244.
[27] *HK*, pp. 338.
[28] Concerning ʿUmar ibn al-Furāt's consideration as *bāb*, see, for example, *MA*, pp. 6–7; *BS*, p. 255.

demonstrates the tie between religion and economics. The financial backing of the Numayriyya/Namīriyya by the Banū ʾl-Furāt was known to the Shīʿī community and documented by their contemporary heresiographers.[29]

The revelation of the Banū ʾl-Furāt's secret activity by the authorities, their economic corruption as well as their personal rivalries with Sunnī administrators, caused their liquidation by the ʿAbbāsids shortly after the period of Ibn Nuṣayr. Nevertheless, the Numayriyya/Namīriyya could survive economically because the leaders were middle-class intellectuals. The sophisticated studies of the *muwaḥḥidūn* demanded a certain level of education that could be obtained only by learned people. Halm claims that the majority of the sect's members were middle-class Kufan *mawālī* (clients, converted Muslims), but in the circle of Ibn Nuṣayr two secretaries (*kātib*, pl. *kuttāb*) are mentioned, a fact that indicates the sect included some upper-class *mawālī* as well.[30]

1.5 *The* nidāʾ *of Ibn Nuṣayr*

The end of Ibn Nuṣayr is not considered a tragic one for the Nuṣayrīs. His excommunication was the result of his own choice. According to the sect's earliest sources, Ibn Nuṣayr performed the *nidāʾ*, a Nuṣayrī term for a public declaration of the Imām's divinity. This act was a ritual performed by mystics who achieved such a high level of spirituality that they permitted themselves to abolish *taqiyya* (concealment of beliefs) and reveal their secret knowledge.[31] According to Nuṣayrī

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[29] See, for example, two Shīʿī heresiographers from the ninth century: Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ, 1984), pp. 93–94; Saʿd ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Qummī, *Kitāb al-maqālāt wa-ʾl-Firaq* (Teheran: Maṭbaʿat Ḥaydarī, 1963), pp. 100–101. According to al-Nawbakhtī, it was the brother of the vizier, Muḥammad ibn Mūsā ibn Ḥasan ibn al-Furāt who financed Ibn Nuṣayr. Al-Qummī gives the name Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn al-Furāt.

[30] See H. Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten: Die Mufaddal-Tradition der Ġulāt und die Ursprünge des Nusairiertums," *Der Islam* 58 (1981), p. 85. Halm's hypothesis concerning the majority of *mawālī* can be supported by the fact that, among the members of the *namīriyya*, other than Ibn Nuṣayr, there is only one member with an Arab *nisba*, that of Ḥasan ibn Mundhir al-Qaysī, "who was standing [as a guardian ?] outside the *majlis*"; see *HK*, p. 338.

[31] This ritual recalls the Sūfī *shaṭaḥāt* (sing. *shaṭḥa*), the ecstatic declaration of the mystic Sūfī as a result of his claimed unification with the deity. While the Sūfī declares that he has reached a degree of divinity, the *nidāʾ* is a declaration of the *bāb* concerning the divinity of the Imām, which is the *maʿnā*.

sources, this ritual had, in previous periods, been performed by well-known Ghulāt who believed they were *bāb*s of the Imāms. They all knew the consequences of their acts, but were ready to face death. They believed that the Imām would curse them only as an act of *taqiyya*, an act of concealment in order to prevent persecutions.[32] In other world, the Imām must excommunicate the extremist *bāb*s or else the whole Shīʿī community would be accused of heresy by the Sunnī authorities. The Sunnī authorities would then execute mystics whom they considered to be heretics. But according to the Nuṣayrī tradition, the curse of the Imām was a blessing. The mystics believed that their execution would not take place in reality, but only apparently in the eyes of their enemies.[33]

1.6 *Successor*

The Namīriyya lived permanently under *taqiyya*. Their meetings as well as their doctrines were kept secret because of the dangerous situation under the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, and particularly in Iraq where there were serial executions of viziers, rebellions by frustrated groups such as the Zanj slaves, attacks by the Qarmaṭian extremist sect against citizens and pilgrims, and imprisonment of Shīʿī leaders, including the Imām in Samarra. This long state of instability during the ninth century and the first half of the tenth century was the result of a general socio-religious and economic crisis in the ʿAbbāsid caliphate.

The *taqiyya* was so effective, that Shīʿī authorities could not guess who Ibn Nuṣayr's successor was. Al-Nawbakhtī (tenth century) gives three names of possible candidates, one of them from the Banū 'l-Furāt, but none of them was the real successor.[34] Nuṣayrī sources reveal that Ibn Nuṣayr's choice was not economic, but religious. From his disciples, he chose the most gifted, Muḥammad ibn Jundab, and not the wealthy Ibn al-Furāt.

The secret appointment of Ibn Jundab is documented in Ibn Nuṣayr's *al-Akwār wa-'l-adwār al-Nūrāniyya*. According to this book, Ibn Jundab was called by his master and bowed in front of him. Ibn

[32] See R. Strothmann, "Taḳiyya", *EI* 4 (1913–1936) pp. 628–629. According to the *taqiyya*, a widespread principle of survival among Shīʿī communities, a person must pretend to accept his rival's dogmas and keep his real beliefs secret.

[33] The ritual of the *nidāʾ* is stressed in al-Jillī's *Risālat al-andiya*; see *RA*, pp. 330–331. The ritual is sometimes called *taṣrīḥ* (declaration); see, for example, *RR*, p. 114.

[34] al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, pp. 93–94; al-Qummī, *Kitāb al-maqālāt wa-'l-firaq*, p. 101.

Nuṣayr told him that the Imām had chosen him to keep his esoteric knowledge.[35] Ibn Nuṣayr gave Muḥammad ibn Jundab permission to write a commentary to the "two books" (see Appendix 1). These concern the mystery of the *akwār* (the cycles of light) and the mystery of the *mithāl wa-'l-ṣūra* (the spiritual form and the material form).[36] According to Ibn Jundab's account, the period of study for these books was one year and seven months.[37]

1.7 *The tradition of Ibn Nuṣayr's superiority over his predecessors*

We have no additional information concerning the activity of Ibn Nuṣayr. It seems that he died shortly after the last Imām's *ghayba*. According to the Nuṣayrī tradition, Ibn Nuṣayr was the personification of both the *ism* and the *bāb* (the name of God and his gate), the first two and most important emanations of the divinity. According to al-Khaṣībī, he was called Abū Shuʿayb because "the meanings of the *ism* and the *bāb* were split in him" (*tashaʿʿabat fīhi maʿānī 'l-ism wa'l-bāb*).[38] The explanation of his superiority over the preceeding *bāb*s has a historical aspect. Since the life of Ibn Nuṣayr coincided with the lives of two Imāms, as well as with the appearance and the occultation of the last Imām, he played two roles. According to a later tradition by al-Khaṣībī, in the time of the Imām ʿAlī al-Hādī, who was the *maʿnā*, ʿUmar ibn al-Furāt was the *ism* and Ibn Nuṣayr the *bāb*. The three aspects of the divinity then performed a transition (*siyāqa*), and the Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī became the *maʿnā*, Ibn Nuṣayr the personification of the *ism*, and the twelfth and last Imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, was the *bāb*.[39] Illustration of al-Khaṣībī's *siyāqa*:

Bāb	*Ism*	*maʿnā*
Ibn Nuṣayr	ʿUmar ibn al-Furāt	ʿAlī al-Hādī
Muḥammad al-Mahdī	Ibn Nuṣayr	Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī

[35] *AAN*, p. 58.
[36] I thank Professor Paul Fenton for proposing this exact translation of the terms *mithāl* and *ṣūra*.
[37] *AAN*, p. 205. Muḥammad ibn Jundab is sanctified as the one authorized to give his opinion (*ra'y*) about Ibn Nuṣayr's doctrines (*BS*, p. 27 in chapter 11 of the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*).
[38] *FRR*, p. 111. See also *ARM*, pp. 10–11.
[39] *RR*, p. 55.

After what they believed to have been the last personification of the deity, the Nuṣayrīs were left without any charismatic leader, and the sect was excommunicated by the Shīʿī community. Isḥāq al-Aḥmar left the group to create a rival sect, the Isḥāqiyya.[40] At this moment of crisis Isḥāq's act probably weakened the sect severely. The Nuṣayrīs have cursed the Isḥāqiyya in their writings ever since.

1.8 *Literature*

From the Nuṣayrī sources it can be concluded that Ibn Nuṣayr was more a teacher than a writer. Other than his two most important works, his *Kitāb al-akwār wa-'l-adwār al-Nūrāniyya* and the *Kitāb al-mithāl wa-'l- ṣūra* (see Appendix 1), it seems that the books that were lost were few in number. There are some citations of two other books entitled *al-Kāfī li'l-ḍidd al-munāfī*[41] and *Kitāb al-mawārid*,[42] both concerning the *taʿlīq* (initiation to the mystical circle of the sect). A rare citation from a poem he wrote may indicate that he was also writing poetry.[43]

1.9 *Transition period*

The period that followed that of Ibn Nuṣayr was characterized by the leadership of two intellectual mystics who lacked Ibn Nuṣayr's charisma: Muḥammad ibn Jundab and his successor ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān al-Junbulānī. Since in their period, the end of the ninth century, the sect seems to have been reduced to a small number of followers follow-

[40] Concerning the Isḥāqiyya, see H. Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten: Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der Ġulāt und die Ursprünge des Nusairiertums," *Der Islam* 55 (1977), pp. 245–253; *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī 'l-Islām*, pp. 195–196. Halm's account of their history since the tenth century is based merely on al-Ṭawīl's *Taʾrīkh* (*TA*). This source is quite problematic. This book uses for the first time an original source belonging to the Isḥāqiyya, the *Ādāb ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib* (*AAM*, see Appendix 1), which gives names of three members of his *majlis*: al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥammād and Mudrik ibn Yazīd "the Armenian", both unknown, who were probably his main followers, and the mystic Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Mihrān "the Persian" from Kufa, who was one of his teachers; see *AAM*, p. 262. Concerning Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh ibn Mihrān, see Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten", pp. 237, 243–245. Here again, as in the above-mentioned list of Ibn Nuṣayr's disciples, the origin of this person supports Halm's hypothesis concerning the majority of *mawālī* among the Ghulāt sects.

[41] See: *HIF*, pp. 53, 105, 110, 112.

[42] Ibid., pp. 49, 53. Another book, *Aqrab al-asānīd*, attributed to Ibn Nuṣayr, mentioned only once in *Kitāb īdāḥ al-miṣbāḥ* (Appendix 1, item 11), is a problematic source. See *IM*, p. 272; the citation deals with the prohibition of wine.

[43] *MN*, fol. 100a in the bottom.

ing its excommunication, information concerning their background is lacking. It is possible that Ibn Jundab had a very high position in his small community, a fact that can be drawn from his sanctification in later texts. In those documents, he is seen as the last manifestation of the *yatīm al-akbar*, the head of the five *aytām* (entities emanating from the *bāb*, charged with the creation of the universe).[44]

Halm associates al-Jannān with the Persian influence that characterizes the Nuṣayrī religion.[45] However, this influence is already present in Ibn Nuṣayr's writings. Moreover, only his nickname *al-zāhid al-Fārisī* (the Persian ascetic) indicates al-Jannān's Persian influence. His only available book, the *Kitāb īdāḥ al-miṣbāḥ* (see Appendix 1) contains no trace of Persian doctrines. However, al-Jannān, who lived in Junbulā', a village between Kufa and Wasit,[46] had a tremendous role in the survival of the sect. He had some connection with members of a local Shīʿi family, the sons of a certain Ḥamdān al-Junbulānī, who had personal ties with the eleventh Imām. From Ḥamdān's family arose the most gifted leader in the history of the Nuṣayrī sect: al-Ḥusayn al-Khaṣībī.

2. *Al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī: the founder of the sect*[47]

Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī was born in Junbulāʾ in the second half of the ninth century.[48] He was nicknamed al-Khaṣībī after his grandfather, al-Khaṣīb.[49]

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[44] Ibn Jundab, as the *yatīm al-akbar*, is seen as the personification of al-Miqdād, the main supporter of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib; see, for example *DMA*, fol. 148b; *TDN*, p. 209. He is also called *yatīm al-waqt wa-'l-sāʿa* (unique of the time and the hour), a messianic title; see *RMU*, p. 178.

[45] Halm, ibid., pp. 257–258.

[46] Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1990), vol. 2, p. 195. It seems that the Nuṣayrī cell in this region still existed in Yāqūt's time (the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century) in the village of Shurṭa, between Basra and Wasit; see ibid., vol. 3, p. 379.

[47] The following biography is based on my article, with some corrections and additions: Y. Friedman, "Al-Ḥusayn ibn Hamdān al-Khaṣībī: A historical biography of the founder of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīte sect", *Studia Islamica* 93 (2001), pp. 91–112. In some imprints and catalogues al-Khaṣībī is vocalized as al-Khusaybī, a mistake corrected by Massignon and Halm.

[48] The dating of al-Khaṣībī's birth in 260/873 is by al-Ṭawīl (*TA*, p. 259), who aims to connect this to the death of the Imām al-ʿAskarī in the same year and thus is not reliable.

[49] Muḥammad al-Amīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa* (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat al-Itqān, 1947), vol. 15, pp. 345–346.

Ḥamdān, al-Khaṣībī's father was a transmitter of Shīʿī traditions, mostly connected with the *sīra* (biography) of the Prophet Muḥammad.[50] His uncle Ibrāhīm ibn al-Khaṣīb was a *murābiṭ* of the Imām al-ʿAskarī.[51] Another uncle, Aḥmad ibn al-Khaṣīb was one of the seventy faithful who went to Samarra to congratulate al-ʿAskarī on the birth of his son, the *mahdī*. Like his brother Ḥamdān, he seems to have excelled in *sīra* literature.[52]

Al-Khaṣībī was raised in a Shīʿī family that was close to the Imām and was thus exposed to religious experiences from an early age. In the *Hidāya*, he states that already in 273/886 he prayed with the congregation of the mosque in western Medina in which the Prophet Muḥammad and his cousin ʿAlī had prayed together.[53] In another place in his book, he states that he performed the *ḥajj* (the pilgrimage in the holy months in 282/895, and before that had ascended Mount Abū Qubays, where he saw the Prophet's footprints.[54]

Al-Khaṣībī inhabited a broad spiritual world. His writings reveal a man with a rich command of Arabic, learned in the religious sciences (especially the Qurʾān, exegesis and Ḥadīth) and a talented poet equally knowledgeable about *jāhilī* (pre-Islamic) and Islamic poetry.[55]

2.1 *His first mystical guidance*

While still young, his education took a radical turn when he met ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān, a fellow townsman, probably at the instigation of his uncle Aḥmad.[56] Al-Jannān introduced him to the doctrine of Ibn Nuṣayr, as he received it from his teacher Muḥammad ibn Jundab. Thus

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[50] *HK*, pp. 54, 59, 60, 67, 69, 151–153, 159.

[51] Ibid., p. 67. Here a translation error in my article is corrected: the *murābiṭ* was the devoted assistant of the Imām, or the person who was in charge of tying his horse. See E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1867), vol. 1/3, pp. 1013–1014.

[52] *HK*, pp. 344–349; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 78, pp. 395–397.

[53] *HK*, p. 121.

[54] Ibid., pp. 67–68.

[55] For examples of quotations of *jāhilī* poetry in his book, see ibid., pp. 110, 111, 197; for Islamic poetry, see pp. 106–107, 406.

[56] A connection between al-Khaṣībī's uncle, Aḥmad, and al-Jannān is hinted at by their both appearing among the representatives of Junbulāʾ in the group of 70 disciples who traveled to Samarra. Moreover, the *Risālat ikhtilāf al-ʿalamayn* gives an explicit account of the handing over of al-Khaṣībī in his childhood, by his uncle Aḥmad and his father Ḥamdān, to al-Jannān in order to initiate him into esoteric knowledge. See *RIA*, p. 300. Concerning this source, see Appendix 1, item 11.

the major Nuṣayrī *isnād* (chain of transmitterṣ was created. Although we find many *isnād*s passing through other Ghulāt, the main transmission of the mystical traditions was through the leaders of the sect:

Ibn Nuṣayr > Muḥammad ibn Jundab > ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān > al-Ḥusayn al-Khaṣībī.[57]

Al-Jannān's influence on al-Khaṣībī was decisive. Al-Khaṣībī decided to follow in his teacher's footsteps, in the knowledge that this was not the path of the majority of Shīʿīs. This guidance was more than a teaching; it was an initiation to esoterical knowledge. Al-Khaṣībī's relationship with al-Jannān was considered an adoption (*akhdh al-ubuwwa*) and from now on, al-Khaṣībī was his "son" (*walad*), i.e. his particular disciple. Their relationship became the pattern for the attachment between Nuṣayrī shaykhs and their disciples in the future.[58]

It seems that al-Jannān's death towards the end of the ninth century[59] ended al-Khaṣībī's initiation into the doctrines of the Numayriyya/Namīriyya. In the absence of a guide, al-Khaṣībī searched for someone else who would be capable of continuing his study of Ibn Nuṣayr's mystical teachings. The members of the sect were so few, that there are no other accounts any meetings between al-Khaṣībī and a member of the Numayriyya/Namīriyya.

2.2 *His second mystical guidance*

It was only in 314/926 that al-Khaṣībī found an old mystic, named ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad, who lived in Ṭurbāʾ, a village near Karbala, and who claimed he was a direct disciple of Ibn Nuṣayr. According to a Nuṣayrī tradition, their meeting took place in the old shaykh's garden, near the ʿAlqamī, a river that branches from the Euphrates, on 10 Muḥarram. ʿAlī revealed to al-Khaṣībī the mystical meaning (*bāṭin*) of that day, the day of *ʿāshūrāʾ*. It is stated that 150 of the mystic's pupils also participated in this meeting. ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad told al-Khaṣībī that in this place he met the two Imāms ʿAlī al-Hādī and Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī. They each gave ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad 17 date kernels and appointed him as

[57] See, for example, *BS*, p. 15.

[58] *RIA*, p. 297. Their connection was considered an "attachment" (*ittiṣāl*); see the discussion of initiation in Chapter 3.

[59] According to *TA*, p. 258, al-Jannān died in 287/900, but no references are given.

safīr (representative) in Ṭurbāʾ. Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī gave him 35 dates, which he distributed to his 34 disciples. Then, according to ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad, Isḥāq al-Aḥmar paid him a visit to ask for the remaining date, but the Imām told him to save it for Ibn Nuṣayr whom he named the "Gateway to God and Leader of the Faithful" (*bāb Allāh wa-walī al-muʾminīn*).[60]

This story repeats the symbolic motifs of the dates given by the Imām to his chosen followers as well as Isḥāq's attempt to steal Ibn Nuṣayr's blessing. The importance of this tradition in this context is the transmission of esoteric knowledge to al-Khaṣībī, who from now on became the leader of the sect. The significance of the number 17 is dealt with in Chapter 2.

2.3 *Becoming a leader*

Al-Khaṣībī, equipped by Imāmī as well as mystical knowledge, was ready to lead the Numayriyya/Namīriyya. He did not regard himself as the leader of a Shīʿī splinter group, but rather as the guide of the community that followed the true path of the Shīʿa in accordance with the will of the Imām and his *bāb*, Ibn Nuṣayr. Convinced of his own righteousness, al-Khaṣībī refers in his poems to his disciples as "the true Shīʿa" (*Shīʿat al-ḥaqq*).[61] Moreover, from the Nuṣayrī tradition we learn that as a result of his mystical studies, al-Khaṣībī saw himself as a mediator between the human world of his disciples and the spiritual world. His poems are filled with religious enthusiasm. In a certain section of his *Qaṣīda al-ghadīriyya*, he describes a mystical experience of his, referring to himself in the third person:

> All these are knowledge, grasping and understanding as
> well as traditions of a skilful transmitter /
> Who transmitted the truth concerning the zeal to God [*al-ghulūw ilā Allāh*[62]]
> not from his enemies [*aḍḍāḍ* sing. *ḍidd*] and people of perdition
> He is one who believes in the Holy Salmān Bahman [*salsalī muqaddas bahmanī*]
> who loves the tiger [*namir*, a clear reference to

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[60] *MA*, pp. 126–131.

[61] See, for example, *MA*, p. 113. The subject of the self-definition of the Nuṣayrīs is emphasised in Chapter 4.

[62] Concerning this interesting positive use of the term *ghulūw*, see Chapter 2.

Ibn Nuṣayr al-Numayrī/Namīrī]
Your Junbulānī is a descendant of Khaṣīb /
Worshipper of twelve moons [the Imāms]
His father [teacher, al-Jannān] was fed with the most secret of secrets /
From the exegesis of the Exegete [ʿAlī or his last descendant Imām]
And [al-Khaṣībī] rose up to the *ḥijāb* [veil], the *ḥijāb* of God /
Until he cast anchor in the sea of hearts
And was watered with the fine wine of Salsal [esoteric epithet of Salmān al-Fārisī] /
And he was given to drink by the Lord of Sufficient Truth
And he swore to give the shortcomers [the Imāmī Shīʿīs[63]] to drink /
In the name of the slaughterer, the drink of the slaughtered [the martyr al-Ḥusayn]
And he will be seen by anyone who gazes upon him clearly /
While remains without being present [doctrine of Docetism]
And the glorious grandson of Khaṣīb will stand /
At the head of the holy ones in the impressive place [hint to al-Khaṣībī's leadership]
When he tells those who wandered and strayed [again, hint at non-mystical Shīʿīs] /
About Abū Shabbir [al-Ḥusayn or his father ʿAlī[64]] and the light of Shabīr[65]

The verses of the *qaṣīda* show that al-Khaṣībī underwent a mystical experience that convinced him that he was right and caused him to feel that a higher being (the divine Salmān or his envoys had appointed him as leader of his community.[66] Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī, one of al-Khaṣībī's follower, cites in his *Risālat ikhtilāf al-ʿālamayn* (see Appendix 1) other lines from the *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī*, describing mystical elevations, in order to prove his sanctity.[67]

[63] Concerning the use of this term for the non-mystic Shīʿīs, see Chapter 3. See also Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 122, note 43.

[64] Abū Shabbir is al-Ḥusayn's epithet in a lament in his memory sung at Karbala; see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 42, p. 241. Abū Shabbir might be his father ʿAlī, as Shabbir and Shabīr are nicknames of his sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. According to Shīʿī tradition, the two were given the same nicknames as Aaron's sons (Hebrew, Shefer and Shafīr) before these names were translated into Arabic as Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. See M. Bar-Asher, "On the place of Jews and Judaism in the early Shīʿī religious literature" (in Hebrew), *Peʾamim* 61 (1994), p. 29.

[65] *DKH*, fol. 11 a, b lines 54–64. Compare with the almost identical version in *MA*, p. 59, the same lines.

[66] The relationship between al-Khaṣībī and the *ism*/*ḥijāb* is hinted at in the first chapter of *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*; see BS, p. 9. The *ḥijāb* saved al-Khaṣībī from prison.

[67] *RIA*, pp. 294, 302.

2.4 *Open propaganda*

It is possible that al-Khaṣībī, who wanted to follow Ibn Nuṣayr's doctrine, decided to perform the ritual of *nidā*ʾ and to sacrifice himself by revealing the mystical secret doctrines. According to the sect's tradition, he began to spread his message via open propaganda, and thus placed himself and his disciples in severe danger. The center of the Muslim empire, Iraq, was extremely unstable, and this instability reached its height at the beginning of the tenth century. Yet even the execution of the Ṣūfī mystic Ḥallāj, the widespread arrests initiated by the authorities in Baghdad and the liquidation of those suspected of aiding the Qarmaṭian rebels, were not enough to deter al-Khaṣībī.[68]

It would seem that the Nuṣayrī tradition, according to which the governor of Baghdad imprisoned al-Khaṣībī for openly preaching his message, can be dated to the period 314–333/926–945 (between his meeting with the old mystic in Ṭurbāʾ and the domination of the Buyids in Baghdad).[69] This imprisonment, which is echoed through the *Dīwān* of al-Khaṣībī, ended with a mysterious escape. According to a Nuṣayrī tradition:

> When he had the chance he ran away and spread among his disciples that Jesus had rescued him, and that he [Jesus] was [the reincarnation of the Prophet] Muḥammad and of the eleven sons of Muḥammad's daughter [i.e. the Imāms descended from Fāṭima].[70]

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[68] On the situation in Iraq in general and in Baghdad in particular in this period, see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi ʾl-taʾrīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1987), vol. 7, pp.1, 23, 34, 64, 74; A. A. Duri, "Baghdad", *EI*^{2} I (1986), pp. 899–900; D. Sourdel, "ʿIrāq", *EI*^{2} III (1986), p. 1255. Concerning Ḥallāj, see: L. Massignon, *La Passion de Hallāj, martyr de l'Islam*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

[69] Brockelmann assumed that al-Khaṣībī did not escape but was released when the Ḥamdanids conquered Baghdad for a short period. This mistake derives from al-Ṭawīl's account in his *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn*, according to which al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Taghlibī (not al-Khaṣībī!) released his father Ḥamdān from his imprisonment in Baghdad in 283/896. This error stems from the confusion between the two al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdāns, the Hamdanid and the Nuṣayrī, as well as between the Taghlibī father who was imprisoned and his son. See *TA*, pp. 306–307; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: Brill, 1937–1942), vol. 4, p. 326.

[70] *BS*, p. 16. The *hijāb* himself saved al-Khaṣībī according to his *Dīwān*; see *DKH*, fol. 113b. One should take care not to identify this description with a similar story about the imprisonment of Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ, leader of the Qarmaṭian sect. This mistake repeats itself among scholars; see, for example, M. Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulāt Sects* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1980), pp. 262–266, 504 note 56.

It would seem, then, that the cause of al-Khaṣībī's imprisonment was his public preaching of his mystical beliefs, which were seen as heretical by Muslim authorities.

2.5 *Immigration to Syria and creation of a new community*

Al-Khaṣībī's persecution and imprisonment on one hand, and his attraction to Jesus on the other, were probably the reasons for his decision to move to al-Shām (Greater Syria, including Jerusalem; henceforth Syria), where he acted with great circumspection, having learnt his lesson in Baghdad. In one poem he curses Syria and blesses Kūfa, claiming that it was there that the Prophet Muḥammad ascended to heaven, as opposed to the well-known tradition of the *miʿrāj* from Jerusalem.[71] This shows that the Iraqi, of foreign origin and outlandish faith, was confronted by not a few difficulties. Syria also represented the Umayyads in Muslim memory, a dynasty cursed by all the Shīʿīs. The Nuṣayri sources indicate that al-Khaṣībī succeeded in establishing a small community in the city of Ḥarrān.[72]

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[71] *DKH*, fol. 47b–49a; *MA*, p. 177. According to the Muslim tradition, the ascension (*miʿrāj*) of the Prophet Muḥammad to heaven, when he met all the prophets and received his revelation, took place after his nocturnal voyage (*isrāʾ*) to the al-Aqṣā Mosque. Later commentators explained that this mosque was situated in Jerusalem. See B. Schricke and J. Horovitz, "miʿrāj", *EI²* VII (1993), pp. 99–102. Nevertheless, although most of the Shīʿī traditions follow this orthodox version, there is an account in traditional Imāmī literature in which the Prophet Muḥammad was ordered by the angel Gabriel to stop in the middle of his journey to al-Aqṣā at Kūfa and pray in [the place where there will be] the mosque of the town; see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 18, p. 384.

According to another version, which is similar to that appearing in al-Khaṣībī's poem, after arriving at al-Aqṣā Mosque in Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) the Prophet was asked by Gabriel to continue his journey to al-Kūfa in order to pray where "Adam and all the prophets prayed". Then the Prophet experiences the *miʿrāj* from there; see ibid., p. 308. It is interesting in this context to find another extraordinary tradition where the Imām Jaʿfar claims that al-Masjid al-Aqṣā is in heaven. When he is asked about the mosque in Jerusalem, he replies that the mosque of Kūfa is more important; see ibid., p. 385.

[72] The city of Ḥarrān in northern Syria (southern Turkey today) was a center for philosophers and astronomers. It was inhabited by the Sabaean sect as well as Shīʿīs. Dussaud claimed that the Sabaeans had great influence on the Nuṣayrīs, a difficult theory to prove; see Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 20, 44, 74. Concerning Ḥarrān in the medieval period, see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, vol. 2, pp. 271–273. Yāqūt's comment that there is another village named Ḥarrān near Aleppo (*wa-Ḥarrān ayḍan min qurā Ḥalab*) is worthy of note. The Nuṣayrīs may already have settled near Aleppo at this stage, and this may be one of the reasons for al-Khaṣībī's immigration to this city later. See also Fehervari, "Ḥarrān", *EI²* (III (1971), pp. 227–230.

According to Nuṣayrī tradition, the members of this community were called *muwaḥḥidūn* (monotheists) and they numbered 51, divided into 17 Iraqis, 17 Syrians and 17 "concealed and situated on the gate of the town".[73] The choice of the numbers 17 and 51 was not a coincidence. Al-Khaṣībī seems to have followed the mystical message of the symbolic 17 dates he was given by the old mystic ʿAlī al-Ṭurbāʾī. Moreover, this number has a special significance in Islam in general and in Nuṣayrī theology in particular. All Muslims (including the Nuṣayrīṣ are obliged to complete a total of 17 *rakʿāt* (sing. *rakʿa*, cycles of standing, sitting and prostrating) during the day's prayers and 17 Ramaḍān is the day of the greatest victory of the Prophet Muḥammad in Badr (2/624). In Nuṣayrī theology, there are 17 saints at the level of prophets (*munabbaʾūn*) and 51 personifications (*shakhṣ*, pl. *ashkhāṣ*) of the optional prayers (*nāfila*, pl. *nawāfil*).[74] In this light, the choice of 17 March before the Persian New Year as the celebration of Ibn Nuṣayr in the Nuṣayrī calendar is not suprising.[75]

Among the 51 members of the sect in Ḥarrān were the future leaders of the community after al-Khaṣībī: Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī and ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Jisrī.[76]

The poet Abū 'l-Fadl Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī, who was a member of the sect, praises the sect, calling them "Banū Numayr/Namīr who guard their religion in secret".[77] In his *Dīwān*,

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[73] See *sūra* 13 (*al-musāfira*) of *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, *BS*, p. 29 and the same chapter at ibid., p. 17.

[74] *KBS*, p. 255; *KHC*, fol. 11a, 14b-15a. See al-Khasībī's explanations to 17 *munabbaʾūn* and 51 *ashkhāṣ* in ibid., pp. 268, 270 and in *RR*, p. 71. See also the number of the *munabbaʾūn* in *TDN*, p. 215 question 69. The number of the prophets is 17 according to *KMA*, p. 235.

[75] In his research concerning Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, Paul Kraus explains other significances of the number 17. Jābir ibn Ḥayyān considered the number 17 the basis of his theory of the balance of all the components of the cosmos in the material world. His theory was based on the writings of Greek philosophers, who gave a symbolic significance to the 17 consonants existing in classical Greek. In addition, Kraus refers to an Ismāʿīlī tradition that ʿAlī prayed 51 times each day, as well as to other examples of the mystical significance of this number. See P. Kraus, *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān: Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam* (Hildesheim/Zurich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 187–223. Other mystical meanings of the numbers 17 and 51 can be found in A. Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 219–221.

[76] *BS*, p. 17.

[77] *DMA*, fol. 124b. Brockelmann determined the date of his death as 400/1009 without noting his references; see C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: Brill, 1898), vol. 4, p. 327 (item 13).

al-Muntajab mentions another member of the Ḥarrān community, a certain Hālit nicknamed *rabb al-ʿulūm* (master of religious sciences), who is identified as the "brother" of Jannān, and both are "sons" (i.e. disciples) of Ibn Jundad.[78] As already noted, al-Muntajab refers to the sect as the tribe of Numayr/Namīr.

It is not clear whether it was an actual branch of the Arab Numayr tribe or a new "religious tribe", such as the one the Prophet Muḥammad tried to create at the dawn of Islam. The sect is described in many Nuṣayrī sources as a religious brotherhood, as is shown in Chapter 3. To sum up, al-Khaṣībī created in Ḥarrān the first secret cell for his sect, which became an important center for the development of the Nuṣayrī theology.

2.6 *The return to Iraq*

Circumstances in Baghdad changed in 334/945, when the Persian–Shīʿī Buyid dynasty seized power.[79] The new government provided an opportunity for al-Khaṣībī to return to Iraq. He returned to Ṭurbāʾ in 336/947 to visit the *muwaḥḥidūn*. The old Shaykh ʿAlī had passed away, and 140 of his disciples were left.[80] It is important to mention that a group of Ghulāt, whose beliefs were similar to those of the Nuṣayrīs, was arrested in Baghdad in 340/951, after the death of their leader al-Shalmaghānī. They addressed the Buyid ruler Muʿizz al-Dawla in the simple words: "We are the supporters of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib" and were released.[81] This incident could indicate the intolerance towards Ghulāt sects under the Buyid regime as well as their encouragement

[78] Ibid., fol. 124b, 155b, 247b.

[79] On the Buyids, see M. G. S. Hodgson, "The Buyid era", in: S. H. Nasr, H. Dabashi and S. V. R. Nasr (eds.), *The Expectation of the Millenium: Shiism in History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 155–158; J. L. Kraemer, *Humanism and the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1986); C. Cahen, "Buwayhids", *EI*^{2} I (1986), pp. 1350–1357; H. Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shiʾite Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1993), pp. 96–105.

[80] *MA*, p. 131.

[81] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi ʾl-taʾrīkh*, vol. 7, p. 34. Ibn al-Athīr's assumption that al-Shalmaghānī's doctrine is similar to that of the Nuṣayrīs and that he may have been one of them may be based on sources or information that are unavailable today. It is alluded to in one medieval source of the sect where there is a citation from a poem of al-Shalmaghānī concerning the impossibility of the *maʿnā*'s incarnation (*ḥulūl*); see *ARM*, p. 8.

of orthodox Imāmī Shīʿism. It proves that al-Khaṣībī had to conceal his mystical activity in order to survive.

2.7 *Al-Khaṣībī's* taqiyya: *posing as an Imāmī scholar*

Despite his activity among the *muwaḥḥidūn*, surprisingly enough al-Khaṣībī appears in Shīʿī literature as an important transmitter of traditions. Shīʿī traditions on his authority were recorded in the voluminous canonical *Biḥār al-anwār* composed by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1267/1700). Traditions in which al-Khaṣībī appears in the *isnād* deal, among other issues, with the transfer of divine light from one Imām to another,[82] the miraculous birth of the twelfth and last Imām,[83] and the importance of silence during prayer.[84] Traditions in which he is the main tradent, i.e. the last in the *isnād* before the *matn* (the content), include the tale of the journey of 70 disciples to Samarra to congratulate the Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī on the birth of his son, the *mahdī*,[85] and the date of al-ʿAskarī's death.[86] Al-Khaṣībī's *Kitāb al-hidāya* (see Appendix 1) is mentioned in the list of books "around which the millstones of the Shīʿa turn" and "there is no Shīʿī household from which they are absent".[87] In another volume, "the book of al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān" is described by al-Majlisī as a praise-of-Imāms work, but here he adds that a number of biographers rejected it as unreliable (either the book or al-Khaṣībī himself).[88]

Al-Khaṣībī himself relates in his book that, during this period of the crystallization of the Imāmī Shīʿa, he supported the Twelver view of the succession to the Imām. In a house in East Baghdad, in ʿAskar al-Mahdī, he tried through logic and analogy to prove to supporters of Jaʿfar that the only legitimate Imām after al-ʿAskarī was his son Muḥammad, and not Jaʿfar, the Imām's brother.[89] Al-Khaṣībī also heard a tradition from Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad al-Kharqī (or al-Barqī)

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[82] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 15, p. 4.
[83] Ibid., vol. 15, pp. 25–28.
[84] Ibid., vol. 82, p. 27.
[85] Ibid., vol. 78, pp. 395–397.
[86] Ibid., vol. 50, p. 335.
[87] Ibid., vol. 102, pp. 37, 102.
[88] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 39.
[89] *HK*, pp. 384–386. On Jaʿfar's supporters, see Muḥammad ibn Nuʿmān Shaykh al-Mufīd, *al-Fuṣūl al-mukhtāra* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ, 1986), pp. 260, 262; Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, pp. 84–86.

in east Baghdad on al-Khaṭṭābīn (or al-Ḥaṭṭābīn, the district of the woodcutters, probably the right spelling) in Qaṭīʿat Mālik.[90] A certain Abū ʾl-Ṭayyib Ahmad ibn Abī ʾl-Ḥasan heard a tradition from al-Khaṣībī in his house (it is unclear if it is that of Abū ʾl-Ṭayyib or al-Khaṣībī) in the Bāb al-Kūfa road in Baghdad.[91]

In 344/956, al-Khaṣībī arrived at Kufa where he gave an *ijāza* (teaching permit) to Hārūn ibn Mūsā al-Talʿakbarī (d. 385/995), one of the most reliable and important of Shīʿī scholars.[92] Another respected Shīʿī of Kufa, Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās ibn ʿUqda, transmitted traditions from al-Khaṣībī and praised him.[93]

However, in later Shīʿī literature al-Khaṣībī is considered less reliable. Al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058) in his biographical dictionary claims that al-Khaṣībī is not only an unreliable tradent, but also of corrupted theology (*fāsid al-madhhab*).[94] This opinion was also shared by the sixteenth/seventeenth-century Mirza Muḥammad al-Astarābādī, who added that al-Khaṣībī was "a liar with a damned doctrine who should be disregarded" (*kadhdhāb ṣāḥib maqāl malʿūn lā yultafatu ʾilayhi*).[95]

The most severe accusations appear in *Lisān al-mīzān* by the Sunnī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449). Here al-ʿAsqalānī cites a certain Shīʿī named Ibn al-Najāshī (son of the above-mentioned al-Najāshī?), as saying of al-Khaṣībī:

> He mixed [*khallaṭa*, i.e. esoteric and exoteric traditions] and composed [books] of the Nuṣayrī religion and brought evidence for them. He [Ibn al-Najāshī] said: he [al-Khaṣībī] believed in the transmigration of the soul and the incarnation of the deity.[96]

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90 See the first version in *HK*, pp. 328–331 and the second in *ARM*, pp. 18–19.

91 *MA*, p. 133.

92 Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Astarābādī, *Manhaj al-maqāl* (Teheran: Maṭābiʿ Karbalāʾī Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭahrānī, 1307/1889), p. 112. On al-Talʿakbarī, see Aghā Buzurg al-Ṭahranī, *Ṭabaqāt aʾlām al-Shīʿa* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1971), vol. 2, pp. 188–189.

93 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1987), vol 2, pp. 343–344. On Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās ibn ʿUqda, see ibid., vol. 1, pp. 287–289.

94 Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-najāshī* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʿ, 1988), vol. 1, p. 187.

95 Al-Astarābādī, *Manhaj*, p. 112.

96 Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, vol. 2, p. 344. Concerning the verb *khallaṭa*, see below note 125. The accusation that the Nuṣayrīs believed in the incarnation, although it is totally rejected by al-Khaṣībī (see Chapter 2), is typical of Sunnī and Shīʿī heresiography. See for example the accusation of the disciples of Ibn Nuṣayr concerning the belief in his divine incarnation, in Abū ʾl-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, 3rd ed. ed. H. Ritter (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980), pp. 15–16.

This information, which is absent in other Shīʿī sources, was probably censored by orthodox writers in order to clear al-Khaṣībī of these harsh accusations. Nevertheless, al-ʿAsqalānī's purpose was to embarrass his Shīʿī rivals by proving that they considered a *ghālī* an orthodox authority.[97] Nevertheless, the mystical activity of al-Khaṣībī was probably known to some medieval Imāmī scholars. In his *Risālat ikhtilāf al-ʿālamayn*, Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī (eleventh century) wrote that his master al-Jillī told him that the mystical knowledge of al-Khaṣībī belonged among the *ahl al-taqṣīr* (deficient Shīʿīs, i.e. Imāmī scholars).[98]

Whether he was considered reliable or not, it can be concluded that al-Khaṣībī succeeded in constructing a new image for himself in Baghdad, the image of a learned Imāmī Twelver Shīʿī. However, we should not jump to the conclusion that al-Khaṣībī abandoned his secret activity. Rather, his image should be seen as a useful cover for his activity (doubtless clandestine), intended to establish the *muwaḥḥidūn* sect, which he considered the right path of the Shīʿa. In other words, he adopted the Shīʿī principle of *taqiyya*, according to which in time of danger the believer must keep his faith secret, while outwardly behaving as if he were one of his opponents.[99]

2.8 *Establishing the Iraqi center*

Together with this orthodox Shīʿī activity, al-Khaṣībī continued to nurture his community. The new atmosphere enabled him to become active in Baghdad once more, and he appointed his disciple ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Jisrī as head of the *muwaḥḥidūn* community there. The reason for the nickname "al-Jisrī" (who came from the bridge) is unknown. According to a popular tradition, ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā was the inspector of the bridges of Baghdad.[100] Al-Khaṣībī's teachings imparted to al-Jisrī were

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[97] The claims of al-ʿAsqalānī concerning al-Khaṣībī were rejected by the modern Shīʿī scholar Muḥammad al-Amīn al-ʿĀmilī. In his *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa* al-ʿĀmilī strongly condemned al-ʿAsqalānī for what he considered fabricated accusations. See Muḥammad al-Amīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. 15, pp. 347–348. This polemical argument is extraordinarily timeless: a Sunnī scholar from the fifteenth century uses a Shīʿī source from the eleventh century. Then a Shīʿī scholar from the twentieth century attacks his views, using a contradictory Shīʿī source from the tenth century.

[98] *RIA*, pp. 298–299.

[99] See R. Strothmann, "Taḳiyya", *EI* (4) pp. 628–629. The subject of *taqiyya* (prudence) and *kitmān* (concealment) is dealt with in Chapter 2.

[100] This nickname in the *Risālat al-tawḥīd* (see Appendix 1, item 27) is not explained;

recorded in the latter's *Risālat al-tawḥīd*. In this epistle, al-Khaṣībī explained to him that the last manifestation of the deity included the *bāb* Ibn Nuṣayr and the Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, who was the *ism*.[101]

2.9 *The connection with the Buyids*

With the decline of the Banū ʾl-Furāt in the first half of the tenth century, al-Khaṣībī was in need of a new source of funding for the sect. There are indications that the Nuṣayrīs were supported by the Buyid ʿIzz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār (d. 368/978), who was appointed after his father's death in 357/967 to succeed him as the *amīr* (military commander) of Iraq. As early as 344/955, due to his father's illness, he was appointed ruler of Baghdad. Because of his weakness as a leader, he seems to have backed several Shīʿī groups in order to gain their support.[102] Two Nuṣayrī documents from this period show great gratitude to Bakhtiyār. The first is an epistle written by al-Khaṣībī entitled *Rāst bāsh* (Persian, Be righteous!). The combination of a Persian title with Arabic content is explained by the fact that this epistle was dedicated to the Daylamite leader Bakhtiyār but was also copied for other members of the sect for study purposes.[103] The members of the sect, who did not understand the meaning of this title, corrupted it to quasi-Arabic, *Raʾs bāsh*, a title which the Nuṣayrīs used to praise ʿIzz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār, as evinced by the poet al-Muntajab's panegyric dedicated to him.[104]

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see *RT*, fol. 42b. The only explanation is in the modern *Taʾrīkh al-ʿalawiyyīn*; see *TA*, p. 259.

[101] *RT*, fol. 44a.

[102] Concerning ʿIzz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār, see C. Cahen, "Bakhtiyār", *EI*², I (1960), pp. 954–955. The unorthodox tendencies of Bakhtiyār seemed to anger both Sunnīs and Shīʿīs. The Sunnī Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) described him as "feebleminded and little [bothered] by religion"; see ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-ʾl-nihāya* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1988), vol. 11, p. 290. According to the Shīʿī al-Majlisī, Bakhtiyār was "pampered and a seeker of pleasure and wine"; see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 41, p. 352.

[103] The account of al-Ṭawīl that the title *Rāst bāsh* belonged to the greater Buyid leader, Bakhtiyār's brother ʿAḍud al-Dawla, is baseless and ment to glorify al-Khaṣībī. See *TA*, p. 260.

[104] The full name as it appears in the *Dīwān* of Muntajab is Rāʾs Bāsh ʿIzz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār ibn Manṣūr Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Malik [the son of King of] al-Daylam walad [the son, i.e. disciple of] Sayyidinā [our master] Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Khaṣībī; see *DMA*, fol. 167b, 191a. Bakhtiyār is also called Rāʾs Bāsh in a panegyric by the Nuṣarī Shaykh al-Suwayrī (fourteenth century, see below); see *SUR*., fol. 216a–217b.

The details concerning these contacts with the Buyid dynasty are still vague. We can assume that they were on religio-economic rather than political grounds. As we will see later, the Nuṣayrīs praised the two Shīʿī rulers, the Buyid Bakhtiyār as well as the Hamdanid Sayf al-Dawla, regardless of their political rivalries.

2.10 *The successor in Iraq*

Before al-Khaṣībī left Iraq for the last time, he left a kind of will to al-Jisrī. It is recorded in the last part of the *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, in which al-Khaṣībī explains to al-Jisrī how to transmit traditions from him, and asks him to follow his path:

> I command you, sir, to be in contact with your brothers [i.e. the other members of the sect] such contact that it would be clear to the brothers that it exceeds that of fatherhood. You should know that your study is the most superior one and the noblest spiritual ascent [*irtiqāʾ*]. You will say [when transmitting a tradition to them]: X son [disciple] of Y [*fulān ibn fulān*] told me, on the authority of Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī, on the authority of ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān, known as the ascetic who was one of those who saw the Lords [*mawālī*, sing. *mawlā*, i.e. Ibn Jundab and Ibn Nuṣayr who are considered divine creatures] and transmitted from them without mediation. They [the mystics who contacted the Imāms] were in the presence of [the Imāms, the seventh to the eleventh]: Mūsā [al-Kāẓim] and ʿAlī [al-Riḍā] and Muḥammad [al-Jawād] and ʿAlī [al-Hādī] and Ḥasan [al-ʿAskarī] the *Ḥujja* [the proof, usually one of the titles of the *mahdī*] and who transmitted from them without mediation until [the twelfth Imām] the *Ṣāḥib al-zamān* [Lord of the age]. [I would mention] from them [also]: Yaḥyā ibn Muʿīn, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Ḥasanī and ʿAskar ibn Muḥammad the Persian,[105] sons of our shaykh [Ibn Nuṣayr or Ibn Jundab] and his uncles [i.e. disciples of one of his "brothers"][106] and Abū ʾl-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān [father of al-Khaṣībī]...Do not polemicise through it [this epistle] with the ignorants [non-Nuṣayrī Muslims][107] and do not argue over it with the mis-

[105] The three tradents appear in al-Khaṣībī ʿs *al-Hidāya al-kubrā*. Concerning Yaḥyā ibn Muʿīn, see *HK*, p. 392. Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Ḥasanī is mentioned in *isnād*s of traditions cited in *al-Hidāya al-kubrā*; see *HK*, pp. 37, 38, 304, 316, 392. As for ʿAskar ibn Muḥammad the Persian, he may be a person mentioned by al-Khaṣībī, a *mawlā* (here the meaning is client) named ʿAskar; see ibid., p. 349.

[106] This familial terminology for disciple of a colleague exists in other texts. For example the mystic Hālit is considered the "uncle" of al-Khaṣībī. That is because Hālit is the "brother", i.e. the colleague, of al-Jannān, al-Khaṣībī's teacher; see *DMA*, fol. 124b.

[107] The Nuṣayrī term *juhhāl* (sing. *jāhil*) used here refers to non-mystical Muslims, as opposed to *ʿārifūn* (sing. *ʿārif*) used for the mystical shaykhs of the sect. See, for

> taken [i.e. Christians],[108] and be as a fortress to them, do not hide what you know from your brothers, and do not suspect [that they will reveal] what you understand and beware of the thieves and from those who lack fatherhood [i.e. mystical guidance].[109]

The last lines of this epistle, where al-Khaṣībī says: "you should continue to obey those whom I will die obeying",[110] may indicate that he was old when he left these orders to al-Jisrī. According to a Nuṣayrī source, the initiation of al-Jisrī to the mystical religion by al-Khaṣībī was shorter than the minimum of one year. Notwithstanding this, al-Jisrī was chosen as leader because of his extraordinary learning skills and probably because of al-Khaṣībī's poor health and old age, which did not permit the completion of al-Jisrī's guidance.[111]

2.11 *The successor in Aleppo*

In his final years al-Khaṣībī returned to Syria, choosing to live in Aleppo. This decision seems to be based on the patronage of the Ḥamdanid dynasty, which ruled in Aleppo from 333/945. Its strong ruler, the famous Sayf al-Dawla, was known for his patronage of scholars. Al-Khaṣībī was accepted in his court as a respectable Imāmī scholar. The direct patrons of the Nuṣayrīs were family members and subjects of Sayf al-Dawla, Dāwūd ibn Taghlib and Abū ʾl-ʿAshāʾir al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn.[112] Al-Khaṣībī dedicated to the Shīʿī

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example, how al-Khaṣībī describes esoteric knowledge as *najāt al-ʿārifīn* (salvation of the mysticṣ in *MAHS*, fol. 51b.

[108] *Al-ḍāllūn*, and *ahl al-ḍalāl*, the term used here, are common names for Christians; see Qurʾān, al-Fātiḥa (1): 7.

[109] *RT*, fol. 47b–48a.

[110] Ibid., fol. 48b.

[111] The case of al-Jisrī served as a model in the rules of initiation into the Nuṣayrī sect. Through his example, excellent disciples who have not completed their "breast feeding" (the minimum obligation of one year of initiation), are authorized to teach newer disciples; see *HIF*, p. 51. This explains how al-Jisrī could teach Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh without completing his own studies. On the rules of initiation, see Chapter 3.

[112] These two names are mentioned in the introduction of *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī*. Dāwūd seems to be the brother of Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥamdān and his successor as governor of the Diyār Rabīʿa (middle Tigris valley) from 309/921. The other patron mentioned in this *Dīwān* is al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān Abū ʾl-ʿAshāʾir, whose nickname was corrupted to Abū ʾl-Shaʿāʾir; see *DKH*, fol. 4a. Abū ʾl-ʿAshāʾir was the nephew of Sayf al-Dawla and was in charge in 345/956 of two fortresses in the region of Aleppo, ʿArindās and Barzamān; he was later captured by the Byzantines who held him prisoner until his death. See ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī taʾrikh ḥalab*, ed. S. Zakkār (Damascus: Dār al-Baʿth, 1988), vol. 6, pp. 2527–2532.

ruler his book, *al-Hidāya al-kubrā*, which summarizes his exoterical (*ẓāhir*) Twelver-Imāmī work, as well as the *Kitāb al-māʾida*, which is unavailable to us. This information, preserved in Nuṣayrī traditions,[113] was totally censored in Shīʿī literature because of the problematic identity of al-Khaṣībī. However, this matter was preserved by the Sunnī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, who wrotes in his biography of al-Khaṣībī: "It is said that he [al-Khaṣībī] used to frequent Sayf al-Dawla".[114]

We learn from Nuṣayrī sources that al-Khaṣībī used his Imāmī identity for *taqiyya*, or in other words, as a cover for his secret activity among the *muwaḥḥidūn*. From his disciples in Ḥarrān, al-Khaṣībī chose Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī to lead the sect in Aleppo. Although this appointment is recorded only in popular traditions[115] it becomes obvious from the transmission of al-Khaṣībī's major doctrines and traditions by al-Jillī. Examples of such transmission could be found until lately only in the *Akhbār wa-riwāyāt ʿan mawālīnā ahl al-bayt minhum al-salām*. These traditions mainly concerned mystical allegorical interpretations of the Qurʾān, the three aspects of the divinity, Docetism and the transmigration of souls.[116] However, newly available Nuṣayrī sources prove that the majority of al-Jillī's books, dealing with all the doctrines of the sect, were based on al-Khaṣībī's teaching. For example, at the end of his *Bāṭin al-ṣalāt*, al-Jillī wrote to one of his colleagues:

> This is what occurred to my mind in this epistle for you, dear brother, from the mystical knowledge, as I could attain in my understanding and knowledge and which I learned from my shaykh and father [i.e. teacher] al-Khaṣībī.[117]

From one source it is known that al-Khaṣībī was blind in the last year of his life, but it is not possible to determine at what stage of his life he could no longer see.[118] According to al-Ṭawīl, al-Khaṣībī died in

[113] *TA*, p. 260. It is noted also in the anonymous introduction to *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī*; see *DKH*, fol. 4a, b.
[114] Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, vol 2, pp. 343–344.
[115] *TA*, p. 259.
[116] *ARM*, pp. 1, 2, 6, 12, 13. See also Appendix 1, item 43.
[117] *KBS*, p. 271.
[118] In the rules of initiation into the Nuṣayrī sect, this example served to authorize the teaching of blind shaykhs; see *HIF*, p. 61. In this last source al-Khaṣībī is compared to one leader of the Ghulāt, Muḥammad ibn Sinān, who continued to guide his disciples despite his blindness.

346/957, while the Ḥamdanids still ruled Aleppo.[119] Shīʿī sources give an even later date, 358/969,[120] which seems more likely because there is an account of a transmission of a tradition from al-Khaṣībī to al-Jillī in Aleppo in 357/967.[121] According to the popular Nuṣayrī tradition, his tomb, called Shaykh Yābrāq, is situated north of Aleppo. It was still venerated in the time of al-Ṭawīl (beginning of the twentieth century).[122]

Al-Khaṣībī played a central role in the creation of the Nuṣayrī sect. Without his appearance, the mystical circle of Ibn Nuṣayr would have disappeared, as happened to most of the Ghulāt groups in the post-*ghayba* period, with the crystallization of the Imāmī Shīʿa. He created a network of Nuṣayrī cells on both sides of the Euphrates. In Iraq, Basra was the old center of Ibn Nuṣayr, which probably disappeared because we do not have any information about it after the tenth century. New secret cells were established in Baghdad, Kufa and the village of Ṭurbāʾ. On the western side, in Syria, al-Khaṣībī created two new centers of the sect, in Ḥarrān and Aleppo. He found an alternative source of funding, collected the traditions of the sect on his travels and, as we can conclude from his writings, formulated them into doctrines. He left for his followers a collection of compilations that became the sect's canon and guided them in his absence.

2.12 *Al-Khaṣībī's writings*

Unlike his predecessors, who left few books, al-Khaṣībī was a vigorous penman. His writings reflect his double identity, Nuṣayrī and Imāmī. Among his Nuṣayrī work, three epistles are known, the *Rāstbāshiyya* and its *Fiqh* (explanation), the *Siyāqa* and a *Dīwān* (see Appendix 1).

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[119] *TA*, p. 259.

[120] Al-Ṭahranī, *Ṭabaqāt aʿlām al-Shīʿa*, vol. 1, p. 112; al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. 15, p. 345.

[121] *RMU*, 177.

[122] *TA*, p. 259. An interesting account is provided by Nibras Kazimi, an Iraqi writer who visited the site recently. According to Kazimi, the grave of al-Khaṣībī is inside a white domed mausoleum, which is locked, situated in the northern reaches of Aleppo behind an Ottoman mosque built at a later period. Neither the dome nor the mosque carries an inscription. According to Kazimi, "Most of the Sunnis know this tomb as that of Sheikh Yabruq [sic!], a holy man of the 15th century, whose real name, according to their texts, was Shamseddin al-Ahmadi, and has nothing to do with Khasibi"; see N. Kazimi, "Islam and the city", *New York Sun*, Editorials and Opinion, 25 August 2006.

Al-Khaṣībī is also the author of some hymns for prayer (*tarnima*, pl. *tarānīm*).[123]

Among his Imāmī-Shīʿī books is his main work, *al-Hidāya al-kubrā*, also called *Taʾrīkh al-aʾimma*, and *al-Hidāya fī taʾrīkh al-aʾimma wa-muʿjizātihim*.[124] This is his only complete Imāmī work to have survived to the present day. The fact that its contents are almost free of any mystical elements backs the hypothesis that al-Khaṣībī used an Imāmī identity as *taqiyya*. If he had not needed to keep his Nuṣayrī identity secret, he could have allowed himself to write mystical documents dedicated to the Ḥamdānid leader, as he did with the unorthodox Bakhtiyār. Other books by al-Khaṣībī are not available to present researchers and their contents are unknown: *al-Ikhwān*, *al-Masāʾil*, *Asmāʾ al-Nabī wa-ʾl-aʾimma* and a certain *Risālat takhlīṭ*.[125]

Al-Khaṣībī was without a doubt the most charismatic leader of the sect and its main founder. His lifetime is considered the golden age of Nuṣayrī history. His way of life became a legacy for the Nuṣayrīs until the present, and his *taqiyya* served his followers as a crucial means of survival. After his death, his successors concentrated their effort in preserving his teachings.

3. *Crystallization and the editing of books*

The post-Khaṣībī period was characterized by the crystallization of the Nuṣayrī doctrines. The followers of al-Khaṣībī were busy in editing the accumulated materials taught by their master. In Baghdad, as well as Aleppo, the leaders of the sect wrote down al-Khaṣībī's doctrines and traditions, and added their commentaries. They cited older books from the Ghulāt literature, previously canonized by al-Khaṣībī,

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123 *BS*, pp. 51–52.

124 Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, vol. 1, p. 181; al-Astarābādī, *Manhaj*, p. 112; ʿAbdallāh al-Māmāqānī, *Tanqīḥ al-maqāl* ([Najaf ?]: Mubāshirat al-Ustādh Muḥammad Riḍāʾ, 1933), p. 326; Aghā Buzurg al-Ṭahranī, *al-Dharīʿa ʾilā taṣānīf al-Shīʿa* (Najaf: Maktabat Ṣāḥib al-Dharīʿa al-ʿĀmma, 1978), vol. 25, pp. 164–165; al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. 15, p. 347.

125 Al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. 15, p. 347; al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, vol. 2, pp. 343–344. The *takhlīṭ* (confusion) mentioned only in Shīʿī sources is a biographical term for syncretism or confusion of esoteric and exoteric doctrines; see Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, pp. 22–23. Another unknown source of al-Khaṣībī, entitled *al-Farq bayn al-Rasūl wa-ʾl-mursal*, appears only once in the sect's sources; see *RN*, p. 304.

in order to back their claims. Nuṣayrī texts from the end of the tenth century show that the *muwaḥḥidūn* developed a responsa literature of questions and answers.

3.1 *Al-Jisrī and the theological circle in Baghdad*

The *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, as well as popular tradition,[126] provides the main evidence for the theological circle, led by Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Jisrī, active in Baghdad. As early as 340/951, al-Jisrī compiled the answers of al-Khaṣībī, who was still alive, to his disciple Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh and also wrote a treaty concerning the relationship between the three aspects of the divinity. Unfortunately, there is no additional information concerning the Nuṣayrī communities in Iraq. Al-Ṭawīl's logical assumption that this community was destroyed by the Mongols is backed by the information in the colophon of the *SJ* manuscript.[127]

3.2 *Al-Jillī inherits the leadership*

The Nuṣayrī leadership of the community was passed on to Abū ʾl-Ḥuṣayn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī, and not to al-Jisrī. He came originally from the small village of al-Jilla, near Antioch[128] or from the Iraqi al-Jill, a village near Najaf.[129] Until recently, the only available information concerning al-Jillī was an unreliable account from al-Ṭawīl's *Taʾrīkh*.[130] Newly available sources enable us to trace the

[126] *TA*, p. 325.

[127] This document was copied only 20 years before the Mongol invasion and a later copy of the manuscript was made in Syria. This transfer of the document from Iraq to Syria may hint that a migration of members of the sect took place in the mid-thirteenth century. Such migration, if it really took place, could serve as one explanation for the temporary strengthening of the Syrian Nuṣayrīs in that period.

[128] Al-Jilla is mentioned in al-Adhanī's *Bākūra* as one of the villages of the ʿAlawī Shamāliyya near Antioch; see *BS*, p. 56. Halm proposed that his origin was Jilliyya, a village by the ʿĀṣī river in Syria. See Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, p. 210.

[129] See Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʿrīkh al-mam wa-ʾl-mulūk* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2003), vol. 2, pp. 604, 610 (events of the year 13–14/634–5). Al-Jill served as one of the bases for the Muslim forces in the preparations for the battle of Qādisiyya against the Persian Sassanids.

[130] Al-Ṭawīl gives a bizarre account of al-Jillī, according to which he performed the *ḥajj* every year of his life after attaining his manhood, fought in the *jihād*s (holy warṣ in which he was captured by (apparently Byzantine) Christians. But al-Jillī was freed after converting his Christian holder in Acre to Islam; see *TA*, p. 260. This account seems unreliable because the Nuṣayrīs give allegorical interpretation to the obligations of the *ḥajj* and the *jihād* and we do not have details about any of these facts in other sources. Al-Khaṣībī's *ḥajj* was performed only before his mystical initiation.

biography of al-Jillī along general lines. From these documents we can conclude that al-Jillī was a well-educated scholar with wide theological knowledge. Some of his poetry was preserved in Nuṣayrī sources, but there is no indication that he had a *Dīwān*.[131] His background included Imāmī education and mystical initiation received directly from al-Khaṣībī by oral study as well as written material.[132]

The nature of al-Jillī's writings is educational. Most of them are epistles and letters to his followers in which he explains a variety of theological issues he learnt from his master al-Khaṣībī. It is due to his extraordinary ability to memorize al-Khaṣībī's traditions and to give them clear explanations, that he was nicknamed *al-shaykh al-thiqa* (the reliable shaykh). We assume that his *Bāṭin al-ṣalāt* and *Risālat al-bayān* were sent to the Banū Shuʿba in Ḥarrān (see Apendix 1). Two other letters, the *Risāla al-Masīḥiyya* and the *Risāla al-Nuʿmāniyya*, show that al-Jillī included Christian terms in the Nuṣayrī religion. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these writings do not reflect a Christianization of Nuṣayrism, but on the contrary, an Islamization of Christian terms, as is shown in Chapter 2.

Lacking enough references to draw definite conclusions as to the purpose of the above-mentioned letters, it is at least possible to describe their historical background, which was a massive Christian population in Syria, the emergence of the Byzantines as a powerful force in the region, and the need of the Nuṣayrīs to strengthen their community after the death of al-Khaṣībī. The period of al-Jillī was characterized by dramatic events that endangered the survival of the sect. It is certain that the Nuṣayrīs were shocked when Aleppo was captured and burnt by the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus Phocas in 351/962.[133] But the most severe event for the sect was the fall of their main defender and sponsor, the Ḥamdanid dynasty. In 350/967, Sayf al-Dawla died and his principality was gradually weakened by invaders from all directions: Fatimids from the south, Byzantines from the north, Ikhshids from the west and Buyids from the east, until its final fall in 396/1005.[134] This turbulent situation was probably the background of the Nuṣayrī endeavor to spread the message of the sect to other territories.

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[131] One line from al-Jillī's poem is cited in *RMHM*, p. 191.
[132] *KBS*, p. 271.
[133] J. Sauvajet "Ḥalab", *EI*² III (1971), p. 86.
[134] M. Canard, "Ḥamdānids", *EI*² III (1971), pp. 126–131.

3.3 *Signs of propaganda and conversion*

Since the Sunnī population of Syria was hostile to any kind of Shīʿism, it is reasonable to assume that the Nuṣayrīs tried to spread their message to non-Muslim populations. There are some indications that in this period an attempt was made to convert populations to Nuṣayrism in rural territories in Syria. A contemporary Sunnī scholar, Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (d. 456/1064), wrote in his book on religions:

> Among the Sabaʾiyya [admirers of ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ] who attribute the divinity to ʿAlī there is a sect called the Nuṣayriyya that already in our time [eleventh century] took control of the Jund al-Urdunn [north of present-day Israel and Jordan] in Syria, especially of the town of Tiberias.[135]

It is possible that Christian communities on the Syrian coast were the target of Nuṣayrī conversion. Apart from the strange story of al-Ṭawīl concerning al-Jillī's conversion of a Christian in Acre, al-Jillī's *Risāla al-Masīḥiyya* seems to be a document designed particularly for Nestorian converts.[136] The strengthening of Byzantine power exposed the Nestorian community, considered heretical by the Greek Orthodox Church, to severe danger. This hypothesis could explain why al-Jillī's successor al-Ṭabarānī forced himself to celebrate an additional Nawrūz (Persian New Year) holiday on "Great Thursday", a holiday of the eastern churches.[137] However, the question of conversion still demands further study.

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[135] ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *al-Faṣl fī ʾl-milal wa-ʾl-ahwāʾ wa-ʾl-niḥal* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996).

[136] In this source al-Jillī cites Nestorius, the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople from the fifth century and the apparent originator of the Nestorian church. Nestorius is venerated in the Assyrian church, which maintains a community in Syria until the present. The choice of al-Jillī cannot reflect a Nestorian influence, because he does not adopt the main ideas of the Nestorian theology, especially the dual identity of Jesus, the human and the divine. It seems more reasonable that al-Jillī's purpose was to convert Nestorian Christians. On Nestorianism, see C. D. G. Muller, "Nestorians", *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), chap. 3, pp. 721–722.

[137] Al-Ṭabarānī's association of Nawrūz with "Great Thursday" seems a strained effort to add this eastern Christian holiday to the Nuṣayrī calendar. The Nuṣayrī explanation for this day has nothing to do with the original Christian observance of Maundy Thursday before the Last Supper. The content of this holiday is replaced by a tradition transmitted by Ibn Nuṣayr to Ibn Jundab concerning the appearance of the deity in fire and light. This text reflects a Zoroastrian rather than a Christian influence. See *MA*, pp. 212–219 and Strothmann's notes concerning the changing of the original date of this holiday, in R. Strothmann, "Festkalender der Nusairier: Grundlegendes Lehrbuch im syrischen Alawitenstaat", *Der Islam* 27 (1946), pp. 5–6. See more details in Chapter 2.

Another unresolved question concerns the nature of al-Jillī's relationship with the famous Imāmī Shaykh al-Mufīd. Massignon guessed that al-Jillī's *Risāla al-Nuʿmāniyya* was directed at al-Mufīd.[138] Although this source is available (see Appendix 1) it does not back Massignon's theory decisively. Massignon suggested that this letter was sent by al-Jillī's disciple al-Ṭabarānī, based on his sources. His assumption seems chronologically logical because al-Mufīd was a contemporary of al-Ṭabarānī (al-Mufīd died in 413/1022) and al-Mufīd's *Risāla al-muqniʿa* is cited in one of al-Ṭabarānī's books.[139] According to Imāmī sources, al-Mufīd used Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba's *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, which was not a mystical book.[140] Although Nuṣayrī sources show respect towards Shaykh al-Mufīd, they cannot prove the existence of relations between the Imāmī scholar and the Nuṣayrī sect.[141]

3.4 *Al-Jillī's net*

Al-Jillī's groups of followers in Syria lived in several centers in towns that surrounded the rural area meant for conversion, such as Aleppo, Ḥarrān, Beirut and Tiberias. Unfortunately, we do not have much information about these cells. We know only the contents of the traditions that were transmitted in those places from Nuṣayrī literature. Since the region was invaded by several armies and ruled by various dynasties, we can assume that the Nuṣayrīs felt permanently endangered and kept their doctrines secret in order to prevent persecution. Their sources from this period repeat al-Khaṣībī's obligation of *kitmān*, i.e. the concealment of their religion.

The main center was in Aleppo where al-Jillī was living and teaching. This center was still active at the beginning of the eleventh century.[142]

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[138] Massignon, "Esquisse", p. 644 item 55.

[139] *MA*, p. 80, the citation concerns the *yawm al-ghadīr*.

[140] See the introduction to the book, citing a variety of Imāmī biographies of al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba: Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-A'lamī li-'l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1969), pp. 5–7.

[141] The nature of al-Jillī's *Nuʿmāniyya* is apologetic in some places, where he explains the differences between Nuṣayrism and Christianity; see, for example, *RN*, p. 304. Nevertheless, no accusation of Christian heresy pointed at the Nuṣayrīs is evident in al-Mufīd's writings. Whether it was sent to al-Mufīd or not, its purpose seems to be the correction of a wrong impression of Christian influence in the *Risāla al-Masīhiyya.*

[142] Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba said he received a tradition from al-Jillī in Aleppo in 397/1006; see *MHAD*, p. 184. Al-Ṭabarānī received from al-Jillī in Aleppo the tradition of the

The Nuṣayrī sources give some names of disciples about whom we have no information, but their nicknames and their *nisba* indicate that they belonged to the urban middle class and probably were *mawālī*.[143] In the north there was the oldest cell at Ḥarrān, established by al-Khaṣībī and now led by the Banū Shuʿba. We know of another cell that existed on the west coast: in the *Masāʾil Bayrūt* there is an account of a catechism between al-Jillī and his successor al-Ṭabarānī that took place in Beirut in 370/980.[144] In the south, there was a cell in Tiberias mentioned above in the account of Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī. A tradition was transmitted here by the brother of al-Jillī, Abū Mālik al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī in 391/1000.[145] It is from Tiberias that the most gifted disciple and the future leader of the sect, Maymūn al-Ṭabarānī, would come.

Al-Jillī's theological books and epistles were meant for education. His *Risālat al-fatq wa-'l-ratq* and *Risālat al-ḥurūf* (see Appendix 1) are examples of his short and clear educational compositions for his disciples. Al-Jillī's writings were the result of two kinds of communication between members of the sect: the old mystical *majlis*, where a sort of catechism took place in the master's house, and the new series of responsa that was developed between the shaykhs of each cell and their master in Aleppo.

3.5 *Judicial activity*

New sources reveal another genre of al-Jillī's work—the judicial responsa. We find decisions of al-Jillī concerning prohibited food.[146] The main judicial work, the *Kitāb al-ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā*, where his successor al-Ṭabarānī compiled al-Jillī's decisions and answers, concerns

tawḥīd in 384/994; see *ARM*, p. 6, and the *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* in 399/1008; see *DKH*, fol. 3a, b. We do not have any information concerning later Nuṣayrī activity in this city.

[143] Two disciples of al-Jillī's are mentioned in Aleppo: Abu 'l-Tuḥaf Hibat Allāh ibn Mu'ammal and his father Abū 'l-Faraj Mu'ammal; see *ARM*, pp. 9, 12, 13. In their meeting the discussion concerned the appearance of the deity in human form. Other names of al-Jillī's unknown disciples are mentioned in another source: ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qaḥṭān from Tripoli, Abū Aḥmad al-Mashshāṭ and Abū Qāsim al-Bazzāz. The three are mentioned as examples of leaders who had difficulties in their initiation and who needed more time for studying the Qurʾān by heart; see *HIF*, p. 96. Since none of the disciples mentioned here possessed a *nisba* to an Arab tribe, we assume they were *mawālī* (clients of non-Arab origins).

[144] See Appendix 1, item 37.

[145] *RMU*, p. 177.

[146] *ARM*, 23. In this source al-Jillī in Aleppo prohibits the eating of camels and eels.

several aspects of initiation to the sect. The judicial activity, concerning which we have only these two examples, prove that the ties between the Nuṣayrī cells were strong and that al-Jillī's authority was accepted by all members of the sect. The great number of questions concerning initiation shows the success of Nuṣayrī propaganda and conversion in this period.[147]

4. *Maymūn al-Ṭabarānī and the book of the holidays*

Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, was nicknamed Surūr (happiness) after his most important book, the *Sabīl rāḥat al-arwāḥ wa-dalīl al-surūr wa-'l-afrāḥ ilā fāliq al-aṣbāḥ* (the original name of the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, see Appendix 1, item 32). In Nuṣayrī sources he is called *al-shabb al-thiqa* (the reliable young man), probably because he became an authority in his field at a young age. His writings reflect wide intellectual knowledge in esoteric and exoteric Shīʿism, Christian religion, Greek philosophy and the Persian religions. Al-Ṭabarānī had a great ability to organize his vast knowledge and to add his own interpretations and, moreover, to transform the sect's ideas from study materials into active cultic practices. Al-Ṭabarānī was the first and maybe the only Nuṣayrī mystic to use secret ciphers and magical letters in his writings.[148]

His *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* is the most important Nuṣayrī source concerning the sect's holidays. Al-Ṭabarānī was concerned with practical issues: to each holiday he added a *khuṭba* (sermon) or a *duʿāʾ* (prayer), and some were followed by a prayer for a *ziyāra* (visit to a holy tomb).[149] In some prayers he explains how and when the believer has to prostrate or to turn his face and his hands towards the sky.[150] These practical

[147] Chapter 9 in the *Kitāb al-ḥāwī* may hint at a process of conversion, mainly that of Christians. According to this chapter, Christians or Jews could participate in the sect's prayers only if they were converted to Islam. In such case the convert had the right to conceal his conversion from his family. In general, the attitude towards Christians is less negative than that towards Jews. Al-Jillī asks for respect of the *ahl al-kitāb* (people of the book, i.e. Jews and Christians) but not to forget that in the Qurʾān the Christians are praised 7 times and the Jews only 3. According to al-Jillī, the Jews are condemned in 180 places in the Qurʾān and the Christians in only 80. See *HIF*, pp. 88–93.

[148] See Appendix 3.

[149] *MA*, pp. 123–124, 158.

[150] Ibid., pp. 122–123, 145.

additions serves as an additional indication that the sect's propaganda was successful and that there was a broadening Nuṣayrī community of believers in need of more and more rituals. Al-Ṭabarānī's works are a result of a combination of all the Nuṣayrī literature available in his time. Some of his books are edited works, as in the case of al-Khaṣībī's *Rāst bāsh* to which he annexed the *Siyāqa* and the *Fiqh* and added his own notes, the *Baḥth wa-'l-Dalāla,* at the end of each chapter (see more details in Appendix 1). It is al-Ṭabarānī who wrote down the *Dīwān* of al-Khaṣībī, which was transmitted to him orally by al-Jillī.[151] The fact that al-Ṭabarānī wrote more books than any other Nuṣayrī scholar[152] not only shows his great talent, but also the need to preserve the sect's literature in a time of instability.

4.1 *Leadership in a time of danger*

The conditions of the sect in Aleppo were worsening. We do not have any account of the Nuṣayrī center after the period of al-Jillī and it seems that the sect's activity was restricted after the Imāmī Mirdasid dynasty took over the city in 416/1025. This explains why the Nuṣayrīs curse the Mirdasids in one of their sources.[153]

Al-Ṭabarānī probably succeeded to the leadership of the sect at the beginning of the eleventh century, since there is no information concerning al-Jillī after 399/1008. This transfer of the leadership is proved by the *Waṣiyyat al-Jillī li-Abī Saʿīd* (see Appendix 1).

As in the case of al-Jillī, the exact dates of birth and death of al-Ṭabarānī are not given in the sect's sources. Al-Tawīl's biography of al-Ṭabarānī in the *Taʾrikh al-ʿalawiyyīn* is more detailed than that of al-Jillī, but seems equally unreliable.[154]

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[151] Al-Ṭabarānī says in the introduction to the *Dīwān*: "The reliable [shaykh] Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī recited to me [*anshadanī*] the *Dīwān* of our master al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī in Aleppo in the year 399/1008"; see *DKH*, fol. 4, 5.

[152] The bibliography of al-Ṭabarānī contains 12 items (Appendix 1, items 32–43) and Massignon's bibliography contains 17; see Massignon, "Esquisse", p. 644, items 41–57.

[153] As Halm noted, the prophecy of the Imām Jaʿfar, concerning the disaster that will fall upon the Mirdasids after their war against the *mahdī*, is probably a late addition to the *Kitāb al-haft wa-'l-a ẓilla*, by al-Ṭabarānī; see H. Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten", *Der Islam* 55 (1978), p. 261; in the source, see *HA*, p. 133.

[154] Al-Tawīl claims that al-Ṭabarānī was born in Tiberias in 357/967 and went to Aleppo in order to study under al-Jillī. Because of the permanent wars in Aleppo

It is important to note that the city of Lādhiqiyya is not mentioned in any of the medieval sources.[155] This puts in question the hypothesis concerning al-Ṭabarānī's migration to this city, which is repeated by Western researchers, based merely on al-Tawīl's *Taʾrikh al-ʿAlawiyyīn*.[156] There is no evidence in any source that such migration took place in the eleventh century. Al-Ṭabarānī mentions Tripoli (in present-day Lebanon) rather than Lādhiqiyya in his writings. If he did migrate, it would have been to the surrounding rural territories, not to the city. The first tradition in *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* is transmitted in Tripoli in 398/1007.[157] Tripoli is also mentioned as a Nuṣayrī cell in the *Ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā*.[158] Although a great part of al-Ṭabarānī's writings is extant, there is a paucity of information concerning his biography. Not even the year of his death can be determined. It is supposed he died in the first half of the eleventh century. Also uncertain are important questions, such as when exactly the Nuṣayrī migration began to the mountains between Lādhiqiyya and Maṣyāf, known today as Jabal Anṣariyya (henceforth the Jabal). According to our sources, in the eleventh century there were already Nuṣayrī communities in the Jabal. Most likely they were a combination of the immigrants from Aleppo, which later became the *khāṣṣa* (spiritual leaders, initiated into the secrets of the sect) and local peasants converted to Nuṣayrism who later were to become the *ʿāmma* (the mass of believers who follow the shaykhs).[159]

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he left the city and immigrated to Lādhiqiyya in 423/1031. The Isḥāqi Ismāʿīl ibn Khallād took over Lādhiqiyya but was killed by the Banū Hilāl who had converted to Nuṣayrism. Al-Ṭabarānī died in 426/1034. His tomb is situated near the city in the Shaʿrānī mosque; see *TA*, pp. 263–264. None of these events are echoed in other sources. According to Hāshim ʿUthmān, this grave was demolished due to the enlargement of the port of Lādhiqiyya in 1988, and the shaykh's bones were transferred to a special room in the mosque of Bisnādā in the same region; see Hāshim ʿUthmān, *al-Abniya wa-'l-amākin al-athāriyya fī 'l-Lādhiqiyya* (Damascus: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfa fī 'l-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya al-Sūriyya, 1996), pp. 111–121.

[155] The only exception is a tradition that mentions an evil ruler of the city in the time of the Prophet Muḥammad; see *ARM*, p. 25.

[156] See al-Tawīl's popular tradition in *TA*, p. 324, 263. It is repeated in L. Massignon, "Nuṣairī", *EI* vi (1913–1936), p. 966; C. Cahen, "Note sur les origines de la communauté syrienne des Nuṣayris", *REI* 38 (1970), p. 249; H. Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten", *Der Islam* 55 (1978), p. 262; Nuṣayriyya", *EI*² VIII (1995), p. 146.

[157] *MA*, p. 4.

[158] *HIF*, p. 96.

[159] See an explanation concerning these two terms in Chapter 2.

5. *Rival sects: Isḥāqīs and Druzes*

The success of the Nuṣayrī propaganda in the time of al-Jillī and al-Ṭabarānī did not solve the sect's problem of security. The Nuṣayrīs were not the only persecuted sect in the region that took refuge in the mountainous regions of western Syria. In the south, the Druze *daʿwa* (propaganda) was spread by Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī, centered in the Wādī 'l-Taym (present-day south-east Lebanon, western foot of Mount Hermon). According to the historian Ibn al-Athīr, both Nuṣayrīs and Druzes dwelt in the Wādī 'l-Taym.[160] The Druzes were a sect of Egyptian Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism, and spread their propaganda in Syria in the name of the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh (disappeared in 412/1021).[161] The Druzes were probably not serious rivals, because Nuṣayrī medieval sources never mention them. The main rival sect was the Isḥāqiyya, which was headed at this time by Ismāʿīl ibn Khallād Abū Duhayba from Baʿalbak.[162] Al-Ṭawīl wrote about the popular tradition of the rivalry between the pious scholar al-Ṭabarānī and the rich and corrupted Ibn Khallād, as preserved during his time and which was probably based on historical events.

Even if we do not accept the accuracy of al-Ṭawīl's account of this rivalry, it reflects a long struggle between two rival sects in the same territory, which became part of the popular legacy of the Nuṣayrīs. This popular tradition is backed by al-Ṭabarānī's explicit demand to curse Ismāʿīl ibn Khallād, which appears in his *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* in the prayer of Nawrūz.[163]

As for the Druzes, the fact that there is no account of them in medieval Nuṣayrī writings shows that they were not a threat to the sect. On the contrary, it was the Druzes who felt threatened by the Nuṣayrīs who were in the eleventh century much more influential in Syria. The contemporary Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī, the actual founder of the Druze sect, wrote his well known epistle against the Nuṣayrīs, *al-Risāla al-Dāmigha li-'l-fāsiq al-Nuṣayrī*.[164]

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[160] Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī 'l-taʾrīkh* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt, 1982), vol. 10, p. 656.

[161] Concerning the Druzes, see K. M. Firro, *History of the Druzes* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

[162] *TA*, p. 262.

[163] *MA*, p. 222.

[164] Many versions of this epistle are available in manuscript form. Here the Ms. Jerusalem Arab 184, *Rasāʾil Ḥamza*, no. 1109 is used (henceforth Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī,

Since previous studies concerning this epistle have not answered the question concerning its historical context, I will try to propose a logical hypothesis regarding this matter. Not only did the Druze propagandist Ḥamza have to spread his message in a territory already under the influence of the Nuṣayrīs, it seems that the Nuṣayrī writings shocked him. The similarity of the terminology and the theology could not leave him indifferent. Both Nuṣayrīs and Druzes were Shīʿī sects deeply influenced by Neoplatonism and Gnosticism. Both called themselves *muwaḥḥidūn*, and considered the study of esoteric knowledge as the true path to monotheism. Ḥamza focused his attack against the Nuṣayrīs in a book entitled *Kitāb al-ḥaqāʾiq wa-kashf al-maḥjūb* by "one of the Nuṣayrī heretics", directed to the "real *muwaḥḥidūn*", i.e. to the Druzes, not the Nuṣayrīs.[165] The only *Kitāb al-ḥaqāʾiq* to be found in the Nuṣayrī literature is Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī's *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn* (See Appendix 1), which appears also in Catafago's list as *Kitāb al-ḥaqāʾiq*.[166] Nevertheless, according to Massignon's bibliography, the author of this book is none other than Ḥamza ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī,[167] called in the Nuṣayrī sources Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī (The confusion between the authors of the Banū Shuʿba's writings is discussed in Appendix 1).

To conclude, it is very possible that the Druze leader found out that not only was his rival sect called *muwaḥḥidūn*, as was his own sect, but also that one of the Nuṣayrī authors had the same name as his. This could be the reason why he chose to attack the book of this specific author, from all the vast Nuṣayrī literature. This similarity endangered the Druze *daʿwa* and required a warning to prevent possible confusion.[168] However, in the following periods, the Nuṣayrīs and the Druzes probably found a way to coexist, since there is no trace of hostility between them except this *Risāla al-dāmigha*.

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al-Risāla al-dāmigha li-'l-fāsiq: al-radd ʿalā 'l-Nuṣayrī). It was printed in Lebanon by the same anonymous printer of *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*: Anwar Yasin, *Risāla Durziyya ilā 'l-Nuṣayriyyīn* (Diyār ʿAql, Lebanon: Dār li-ajl al-Maʿrifa, 1985). Regarding this epistle, see Sylvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des druzes* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1838), vol. 2, pp. 559–586; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī religion*, pp. 153–161.

165 Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī, *al-Risāla al-dāmigha*, fol. 5a.

166 Catafago, "Nouvelles mélanges", p. 524, item 9.

167 Massignon, "Esquisse", p. 644, item 63.

168 Indeed, this epistle concludes with a warning: "Beware, beware, oh believers! From the sin of lust and brutish passions…you must worship him [al-Ḥākim, the Druze divine incarnation] alone without the other [Nuṣayrī] elements which I mentioned previously"; see Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī, *al-Risāla al-dāmigha*, fol. 16a–17b.

6. *The Banū Shuʿba of Ḥarrān*

The Nuṣayrī center in Ḥarrān was the oldest cell of the sect in Syria. We assume that members of the older Banū Shuʿba were among the 51 disciples of al-Khaṣībī in this town, who later became the leaders of the sect. Ḥarrān was a convenient place to spread the Nuṣayrī message because it had long ago been a center of philosophy and mysticism. It was the first Muslim center of translations of Greek sciences, philosophy and astronomy into Arabic. Indeed, the Nuṣayrī writings in general and those of the Banū Shuʿba in particular were influenced by Greek thought.

The main figure among the Banū Shuʿba was al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba, whose full name was Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Shuʿba al- Ḥarrānī. We do not have the exact dates of his life, but according to newly available sources we know that he was a disciple of al-Khaṣībī[169] and al-Jillī and a contemporary of Shaykh al-Mufīd, which means that he lived in the second half of the tenth century. Al-Ḥasan's *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn* (see Appendix 1) is the most important theological work of the Banū Shuʿba. From its introduction we know about the family's personal library that contained some 300 hundred mystical as well as Imāmī Shīʿī books.[170] Al-Ḥasan had an Imāmī background as is evident from his *Tuḥfat al-ʿuqūl* (in Imāmī sources *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*), which was included in the Shīʿī canon. Nevertheless, it was probably not an act of *taqiyya*, as in the case of the *Hidāya* of al-Khaṣībī, but a book he wrote before he was initiated into the secret of the *muwaḥḥidūn*. It is not clear if al-Ḥasan needed the use of *taqiyya* as much as his Syrian "brothers" in the south and their Iraqi colleages, because Ḥarrān was distant from the strongholds of the Muslim orthodoxy. It seems also that the Banū Shuʿba did not suffer from the struggle with the rival Isḥāqiyya, a fact that explains why they permitted themselves to cite the writings of Isḥāq al-Aḥmar much more than the other members of the sect. Nevertheless, in the books of the Banū Shuʿba there are attacks against the local Ṣābiʾa (the Sabeans), who were probably their main intellectual rivals.[171]

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[169] In his *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn* (Appendix 1, item 44–45), al-Ḥasan wrote that he studied the *Rāst bāsh* epistle directly from al-Khaṣībī; see *HAD*, p. 141. In another place he added that he received from al-Khaṣībī a tradition from al-Jannān "the Persian"; see ibid., p. 151.

[170] *HAD*, p. 11.

[171] See *HA*, pp. 257, 259. Possible influences of the Sabean religion on Nuṣayrism are discussed in Chapter 2.

The next generation included two main writers: ʿAlī ibn Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba, probably the nephew of al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba, and Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba who was perhaps his son. The only work of ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba's we know about is the *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif*. One manuscript attributes a chapter of this book to his father, Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī.[172]

It should be noted that there is confusion between the authors of the Shuʿba family books. According to the sources of Massignon, Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī was even the writer of the *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn*.[173] Thus, the possibility should not be excluded that some of these books were written by one of the Banū Shuʿba, and that other members of the family completed these works by adding their notes. From their writings it seems that they shared the same materials. A rare document, which is cited only by the Banū Shuʿba, is a two-page table of the *ahl al-marātib* in the heavenly world and the material world (see Appendix 4)[174] that is discussed in Chapter 2. At the beginning of the *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif* Alī ibn Shuʿba wrote that he dedicated a copy to a certain *amīr*, Abū ʾl-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar, who was probably the patron and defender of the family, in 408/1017.[175]

The last member we know about is Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad, author of the *Kitāb al-uṣayfir* (see Appendix 1). He is also the author of the important *Ikhtilāf al-ʿālamayn*, which includes the sanctification of al-Khaṣībī.

The following diagram describes the structure of the Banū Shuʿba family:

al-Ḥusayn ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī
/\
ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn
/ \
Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī
/ \
Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Ḥamza

The Banū Shuʿba were the last charismatic leaders of the Nuṣayrī sect who could unify the sect and take decisions for all the members and

[172] See Ms. Paris 1450, fol. 51b.
[173] Massignon, "Esquisse", p. 645, item 63.
[174] This table appears twice in an identical form: *HAD*, pp. 88–89; *HA*, pp. 275–276.
[175] *HA*, p. 240.

cells.[176] Their disappearance after the eleventh century marks the end of the period of the founders of the sect that had begun with the ninth-century eponym Ibn Nuṣayr.

7. *The end of the golden age*

After the period of the founders of the sect came a difficult time when the sect lacked charismatic leadership and was divided between the shaykhs of every village and region. This division was characterized by theological debates, which led to accusations of heresy and the divergence of several groups from the mainstream. This process led to a significant weakening of the Nuṣayrī sect.

This deterioration is well described in the introduction of ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī to his *Ḥujjat al-ʿāriʿf* (eleventh century)[177] and in the late *Munāẓarat Shaykh al-Nashshābī* (see Appendix 1) which depicts the situation in the twelfth century, with some valuable notes concerning previous periods. According to this last source, the Nuṣayrī leader in Aleppo in the twelfth century, al-Jazarī, explained in his epistles that after the time of al-Ṭabarānī, the leadership passed from the scholars (*arbāb al-ʿilm*, owners of the knowledge) to the dignitaries (*arbāb al-manāṣib wa-'l-ḥusūn* owners of the positions and fortresses). The mainstream of the sect, which is called *al-ʿiṣāba al-Khaṣībiyya* (the group following al-Khaṣībī), was led by three shaykhs about whom little is known: ʿIṣmat al-Dawla, succeeded by Ṣidq al-ʿAlam (or al-ʿIlm) and the *amīr* ʿAlī ʿAlam al-Dawla.[178]

The only available information concerns ʿIṣmat al-Dawla, who was a direct disciple of al-Ṭabarānī. He was initiated when he was 14 years old by a certain Abū 'l-Fatḥ to the *mufawwiḍa*, a mystical stream of Imāmī Shīʿism. At a certain stage of his studies he decided to leave his shaykh and learn the *ʿilm al-tawḥīd*, i.e. the Nuṣayrī theology.[179]

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[176] In the *Munāẓarat Shaykh al-Nashshābī* (see Appendix 1, item 52), the Banū Shuʿba, together with Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Khaṣībī, al-Jillī and al-Jisrī are regarded as the "owners of the mystic knowledge" before the transmission of the leadership to the *amīr*s; see *MN*, fol. 140b.

[177] *HA*, pp. 240–241. Alī ibn Shuʿba wrote that his purpose in his book was to present the *ḥujja* (proof) that would guide the rival shaykhs, whom he calls *ʿulamāʾ* (religious scholars), in the right way and put an end to their dispute.

[178] *MN*, fol. 138a.

[179] Ibid., fol 141a. On the *mufawwiḍa*, see Chapter 2.

In the period of these three shaykhs, the sect was backed by three local families, the Banū Muḥriz, the Banū ʾl-Aḥmar and the Banū ʾl-ʿArīḍ, in exchange for their total submission.[180] These families were the owners of fortresses in the Jabal in the eleventh century. The Banū ʾl-Aḥmar were the owners of the Balāṭunos (or Ablāṭunos) fortress in the rural region of Lādhiqiyya in 421–422/1030 before they handed it over to the Byzantines.[181] The Banū Muḥriz were the owners of the Marqab fortress south of Tripoli, until the Crusaders took it over in 511/1117.[182] As for the Banū ʾl-ʿArīḍ, they belong to a later period.

After losing the patronage of these two *amīrs*, the Nuṣayrīs were left defenseless under Crusader rule, between the kingdom of Jerusalem in the south and the district of Tripoli and the principality of Antioch in the north. This situation, which lasted a century and a half, ended with the conquering of the Jabal by the Ayyubid Salāḥ al-Dīn in 584/1188.[183]

8. *Shaykh al-Nashshābī's travels*

In the thirteenth century, a prominent leader emerged named al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī, who saved the Nuṣayrīs from their enemies. Such an important event, which probably changed the situation of the sect dramatically, could not have been omitted from the *Munāẓarat Shaykh*

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[180] *MN*, fol. 140a–141b.

[181] Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Anṭāqī, *Taʾrīkh al-anṭāqī al-maʿrūf bi-ṣilat taʾrīkh awtīkha* (Tripoli: Jurūs Press, 1990), pp. 420, 423; see also, as Balāṭonos, in C. Cahen, *La Syrie du nord à l'époque des croisades et la principauté franque d'Antioche* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1940), p. 173; as Mehlebe/Balatanos, see H. Kennedy, *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 20.

Al-Tawīl's description of the three families is unreliable, particularly regarding the Banū ʾl-Aḥmar in Spain as the defenders of the ʿAlawīs; see *TA*, pp. 326, 331–332, 333.

[182] Ibn Muḥriz, the owner of the fortress, negotiated with the Crusaders to let them rule if his family could stay there. But he was deceived and was removed with his family; see J. Richard, "Note sur l'archidiocèse d'Apamée et les conquêtes de Raymond de Saint-Gilles en Syrie du Nord", *Syria—Revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie*, 25 (1948), p. 236. The fortress was built by a certain Muḥriz ibn ʿAkkār around the year 391/1000; see H. Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*, p. 20. See also in the narrative history of Elyane Gorsira, *Les reines de Jérusalem et les princesses de Terre Sainte: Cécile de France* (Paris: Le Manuscipt, 2003), p. 306. According to her story, lacking references, Tughtekin, *atabek* (Turkish commander) of Damascus (d. 626 /1128), gave the Banū Muḥriz the order to hand over the fortress to the Crusaders.

[183] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Noṣairīs*, p. 22; Halm, "Nuṣayriyya", p. 147.

al-Nashshābī, if, as Bar-Asher and Kofsky maintain, this document was written in the thirteenth century.[184] In addition, the *Munāẓara* describes attacks against the Isḥāqiyya,[185] who were supposed to have been eliminated by al-Makzūn's army.[186] These problems stem from the deceptive date that appears in the *Munāẓara*, 685/1286, the only year mentioned in the document.[187] This date, which is probably an error of the author or later copyists, is misleading. The indicator for the correct dating is the name of the ruler of the area, Zayn al-Dīn Qarājā, mentioned during the debate between two shaykhs at Asfīn.[188] The location of this village is uncertain, but since it is next to Ribāḥ, the *Munāẓara* must belong to the region of Ḥomṣ. Indeed, according to historical sources, Qarājā (d. 604/1207), an important Ayyubid commander, was the *amīr* of this region.[189] Thus, it can be assumed that the right date is 585/1189 and the mistake occurred during the long period of copying of this text.

The places mentioned in the *Munāẓara*, which were visited by the Aleppan shaykh and his disciple, who is the narrator, may indicate the location of the Nuṣayrī communities left under Muslim rule in the period described in this document. In the east the shaykh traveled to the Dayr al-Zawr near the Euphrates (al-Manāṣif, Marīḥ), and in the west he reached the regions of Ḥomṣ (Ribāḥ, Asfīn), Ḥamāt (Qurmus, Suwayda, Rabīʿa), and Aleppo (Qulayʿa, Jarīṣ).[190] It is important to note that al-Nashshābī never entered the territories ruled by the Crusaders in the west. We may conclude that the *Munāẓara* is a document describing events from the beginning of the twelfth century, beginning with a situation of the Nuṣayrīs when they were divided in Syria between the Christian domination of the Crusaders in the west and the Muslim principalities in the east, and ending with their unification under Ayyūbid rule.

184 Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nusayrī-ʾAlawī Religion*, pp. 7, 11.
185 Ibid., fol. 121a, b.
186 Al-Ṭawīl, *Taʾrīkh* (*TA*), pp. 362–363.
187 *MN*, fol. 111a.
188 Ibid., fol. 112b.
189 R. S. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1977), pp. 111, 143.
190 *MN*, fol. 69a, 69b, 70b, 72b, 144a. Most of the villages can be found because they still exist today and their locations correspond to the course traveled by the disciple of al-Nashshābī. I do not share the opinion of Bar-Asher and Kofsky that these villages cannot be located; see M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, "The Nuṣayrī doctrine of ʿAlī's divinity and the Nuṣayrī trinity according to an unpublished treatise from the 13th century", *Der Islam* 72 (1995), p. 262, n. 25.

The travels and debates of Shaykh al-Nashshābī reflect the disconnection between the Nuṣayrīs of Aleppo, the Khaṣībiyya, and the other communities in Syria. According to the *Munāẓara*, al-Nashshābī's disciple heard that the "people of the Jabal" deviated from the right path of the founders of the sect (Ibn Nuṣayr, al-Khaṣībī, Banū Shuʿba and their three followers) and adopted heretical doctrines. In addition, he witnessed his master's attack against the heresy of the Nuṣayrīs of Asfīn (Ḥomṣ).[191] One Nuṣayrī faction that is repeatedly named in the *Munāẓara* is the Ḥātimiyya, followers of a leader of the sect named Ḥātim al-Ṭawbānī (or Ṭūbānī, i.e. from Ṭūbā near Aleppo) al-Jadīlī, from a previous period, about whom we lack information. His followers are accused of the personification of the deity.[192] Catafago's list contains one book written by al-Ṭawbānī, entitled *Kitāb al-tajrīd*, which is not available to us.[193]

The Nuṣayrīs of the Jabal, who were condemned in the *Munāẓara*, were left under Christian rule for more than a century. They were not only isolated from their leaders in Aleppo and Ḥarrān, but also influenced by other sects in their region. According to Dussaud's hypothesis, the Ismāʿīlī sect of the Nizārīs (called by the locals Ḥashīshiyyūn) took control of the Nuṣayrīs of the Jabal at the beginning of the twelfth century. This seems very logical, considering the fact that the Nizārīs took possession of several fortresses in the Jabal in this period.[194] The disconnection between the Nuṣayrī communities and the theological disputes between them weakened the sect and put its survival in danger. In the sect's documents from the twelfth century onwards, no more is heard about the community in Tiberias. According to Ibn al-Athīr, Nuṣayrīs and Druzes shared the region of Wādī 'l-Taym at the beginning of the twelfth century.[195] The existence of the Rajar vil-

[191] See in detail ibid., pp. 258–292.

[192] *MN*, fol. 82b, 83a, 116a, 150a. We know that at the time of the *Munāẓara* Ḥātim al-Ṭawbānī was no longer alive because he was blessed *qaddasahu 'llāh* (may God sanctify him); see ibid., fol. 112b. Al-Ṭawīl's account of al-Ṭawbānī does not fit our dating. He makes him live in the thirteenth century as the teacher of *amīr* Abū 'l-Fidāʾ of Ḥamāt. According to his unreliable account, al-Ṭawbānī was born in 677/1278, an illogical date even if we accept the date that appears in the *Munāẓara* (685/1286).

[193] Catafago, "Nouvelles mélanges", p. 524, item 6.

[194] Dussaud, ibid., pp. 22–23; Halm, ibid., pp. 146–147. For the Nizārī sect, see B. Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). See his assumption concerning the Nuṣayrīs in ibid., p. 98.

[195] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī 'l-taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 656. According to the account of the year 522/1128, the sects of Wādī 'l-Taym were under the protection of the *amīr* of the region, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, who was killed by the *amīr* Bahrām the same year.

lage on the present border between Israel and Lebanon is the last remnant of a Nuṣayrī community that existed until the eleventh century between Tiberias and the Golan.

9. *Al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī and the Nuṣayrī awakening*

The Nuṣayrī legacy was preserved in a popular story of a savior *amīr* named al-Makzūn, who came to the Jabal from Sinjār (northwestern Iraq near the present-day Syrian border), united the sect and saved it from its rivals. The dating of these events is problematic. Al-Ṭawīl's *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* was until recently the only source referred to by modern researchers of the biography of Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī. This *amīr* converted to Nuṣayrīsm and invaded their region in 617/1220.[196]

9.1 *A detailed biography*

The biography of al-Makzūn should be reviewed in the light of an important source which is cited in the research of Asʿad ʿAlī, entitled *Taʾrīkh al-Makzūn*, written in 1913 by the ʿAlawī Shaykh Yūnus Ḥasan Ramaḍān from Jabala.[197] This biography is more detailed than al-Ṭawīl's *Taʾrīkh*. It was written some 20 years before al-Ṭawīl's book and according to its contents it is very possible that it was his major source. Unlike the history of al-Ṭawīl, Shaykh Yūnus gives references concerning his sources.[198] Nevertheless, these facts cannot indicate that this biography is more credible than that of al-Ṭawīl, because there is no evidence for al-Makzūn and his activity in medieval sources. The following account summarizes the main biographical details.

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[196] Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib al-Ṭawīl, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (Lādhiqiyya: Dār al-Andalus, 1966), p. 358.

[197] ʿA. ʿAli, *Maʿrifat Allāh wa-'l-Makzūn al-Sinjārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Rāʾid al-ʿArabī, 1972), vol. 2, pp. 328–349.

[198] The biography entitled *Taʾrīkh al-Makzūn*, was written in 1913 by the ʿAlawī Shaykh Yūnus Ḥasan Ramaḍān from Jabala. Shaykh Yūnus asked the help of other ʿAlawī shaykhs, who gave him private documents concerning his biography. Most of them were copied in the eighteenth century, except one from the seventeenth century and three older manuscripts from the fifteenth century. At the beginning Shaykh Yūnus presents his sources, which are all manuscripts kept in private family libraries. One of them is presumed to have been by an al-Makzūn descendant; see A. ʿAli, *Maʿrifat Allāh*, vol. 2, pp. 329–335.

Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī was a descendant of a certain *amīr* Rāʾiq ibn Khaḍr (or Khiḍr), an ʿAlawī (i.e. Nuṣayrī) contemporary of al-Khaṣībī, from the Banū Ṭarkhān and Banū Faḍl of Yemeni origins.[199] Al-Makzūn was born in 560/1164 or 564/1168 and received a fine education in poetry and in Shīʿī Islam. He studied by heart the *Nahj al-balāgha* (the famous collection of speeches of ʿAlī ibn abī Ṭālib, by al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī) and the Qurʾān. He succeeded as the *amīr* of the principality of Sinjār after his father's death in 602/1205.[200] During the time of his father, Amīr Yūsuf, the twelfth century, the first migration began from Sinjār to the fortresses of the region of Lādhiqiyya, led by the "philosopher" Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Jābir ibn Abī 'l-ʿArīḍ.[201] The latter was probably the leader who ruled the Banū 'l-ʿArīḍ, the third family mentioned in the *Munāẓarat Shaykh al-Nashshābī* as patrons of the Nuṣayrīs.[202] Other significant migrations of Nuṣayrīs from Aleppo, ʿĀna, and Baghdad took place in the same period.[203]

In the time of al-Makzūn, in the year 615/1218, Nuṣayrīs from the region of Banyas and Lādhiqiyya sent a letter to al-Makzūn asking for help against their rivals, the Kurds (brought to their region by the Ayyubidṣ and the Ismāʿīlīs (probably Nizārīs).[204]

It was a massacre of the Nuṣayrīs in the Ṣahyūn fortress during their celebration of Nawrūz that persuaded al-Makzūn to intervene. He came from Sinjār with some 25,000 warriors to fight the Kurds and the Ismāʿīlīs. But he returned to Sinjār in order to double his forces, and brought some 50,000 warriors in 619/1222.[205] He took over the fortresses in the region of Ḥamāt (Abū Qubays) and Tripoli (al-Marqab, ʿUlayqa), where he celebrated his victory with the Nuṣayrī villagers, married his cousin Faḍḍa, and granted lands (*iqṭāʿāt*, sing. *iqṭāʿ*)

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[199] The names of family members of al-Makzūn were added to the *Dīwān* of al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī (see Appendix 1, item 53) in a later period for an unknown reason. We suppose that al-Muntajab lived in the time of al-Khaṣībī, according to the contents of his poems. The lines mentioning the Banū Ṭarkhān and Banū Faḍl, ancestors of al-Makzūn, which appear in the titles and at the beginning of some poems, seem out of context. See *DMA*, fol. 123b, 128b–129b, 144a, 144b, 147b.

[200] A. A. ʿAli, *Maʿrifat Allāh*, vol. 2, pp. 337–340.

[201] Ibid., p. 341.

[202] *MN*, fol. 140a–141b.

[203] A. A. ʿAli, *Maʿrifat Allāh*, p. 341.

[204] Ibid., p. 343.

[205] Ibid., pp. 343–346.

to her brothers.[206] He continued his battles until the Kurds and the Ismāʿīlīs fled from the Jabal. In 620/1223 he wrote his book *Risālat tazkiyat al-nafs*. There was only one last rivalry to settle. His personal involvment in the Nuṣayrī theology led him to organize a theological debate (*munāẓara*) against the Isḥāqiyya and the Duhaybiyya (followers of Abū Duhayba, Isḥāqī leaders and rivals of al-Ṭabarānī). At the end of this debate he massacred them and burned their books.[207] In 630/1232 he wrote his *Adʿiya* (book of prayers, not available to us) and in 638/1240, on his way back to Sinjār, he fell ill and died in the village of Talʿafar near Ḥamāt.[208]

9.2 *Al-Makzūn's innovations*

Al-Makzūn's *Risālat tazkiyat al-nafs* (see Appendix 1) does not add historical information to his biography, except for the date of its composition, 620/1223.[209] His *Dīwān*, like his other works, reflects his charismatic personality, which was a combination of a military commander and a mystic poet. Al-Ṭawīl's biography contains one element that is missing from Shaykh Yūnus's book. According to al-Ṭawīl, al-Makzūn began a tradition that was considered a "revolution in the religion". From his period onwards the secrets of the sect were known not only by a minority of the initiated group. Poets could also write religious poems for all the members of the sect, in which they included the secret doctrines, but they used personal terms and expressions that only the initiated Nuṣayrīs could understand.[210] Another important innovation of al-Makzūn is the addition of *jihād* as a religious obligation. In accordance with the difficult circumstances of the sect, he made obligatory the *jihād al-ẓāhir*, the exoteric meaning of the term, which is war against the infidels and the enemies of Islam. He also ordered the *jihād al-bāṭin*, the esoteric battle of the believer against

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[206] Ibid., p. 354.
[207] Ibid., p. 346. Compare with the account of al-Makzūn's wars against the Kurds, the Ismāʿīlīs and the Isḥāqīs, abridged in *TA*, pp. 359–362. The dates and places are almost identical but the historical account omits many details.
[208] A. A. ʿAli, *Maʿrifat Allāh*, vol. 2, p. 347. According to al-Ṭawīl, he was buried in Kafarsūsa, near Damascus; see *TA*, p. 363. Shaykh Yūnus did not specify the place of his burial.
[209] *RTN*, p. 268.
[210] *TA*, p. 363.

personal sins, lusts, but mainly doubts concerning God.[211] Shaykh al-Ṣuwayrī's *Urjūza*, of the fourteenth century, contains an element of *jihād al-ẓāhir,* the *fidāʾ* (sacrifice), a term which is not found in later sources.[212] Al-Makzūn's *Dīwān* contains typical military terminology such as *jihād, thurūr* (front camp), *naṣr/fatḥ* (victory), and *jaysh* (army).[213] Apart from the *jihād*, another innovation is typical of his poetry. If we accept the credibility of the available copy of his *Dīwān*, it seems to reflect significant Ṣūfī influence. Al-Makzūn explicitly defines his religion as *ʿilm al-taṣawwuf* (science of Ṣūfism), which is for him a synonym of *ʿilm al-tawḥīd* (science of monotheism, Nuṣayrīsm).[214] In his poetry, the element of love for the divinity as a means of getting closer to God is prominent. His comparison between God and a beloved and desired woman is extraordinary for the Nuṣayrī antifeminist approach. Typical Nuṣayrī religious poetry deals with the divinity in the third person and rarely speaks of the spiritual experience of the writer in the first person. But most of al-Makzūn's poetry is personal and the divinity is in the background. Al-Makzūn focuses on his personal feelings and experiences and his love for the members of the sect and for God, using three levels for affection, love and passionate love: *ḥubb/maḥabba, gharām*, and *ṣabāba* or *ʿishq*.[215] These levels are known in Ṣūfism as an important means to attain unity with God (*ittiḥād*),[216] but for al-Makzūn *ittiḥād* is a heresy and love is an aid to the Gnostic return to heaven, but the divinity remains transcendental. Paul Nwyia sees the the writings of al-Makzūn as a combination of Nuṣayrism and Ṣūfism. Nevertheless, in his poetry al-Makzūn tries to alienate himself from Ṣūfism, cursing Ḥallāj and attacking his declaration of unity with God (*anā ʾl-ḥaqq*, I am truth) as heresy.[217] We may assume that al-Makzūn, like other Ṣūfī mystics, was attracted to mysti-

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[211] *RTN*, pp. 302–304. The *jihād al-bāṭin* is discussed in Chapter 2.

[212] *SUR*, fol 218b, 233b.

[213] *DMS*, pp. 94, 107, 113.

[214] Ibid., p. 102.

[215] Paul Nwyia noted that some of al-Makzūn's poems are even erotic, but this should be understood as a typical mystic relation between the believers and God, a view well known in Judaism in the context of the biblical Song of Songs (*Shīr ha-shirīm*). See a general explanation of the connection between eroticism and mysticism in D. Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation in Medieval Germany* (Tubingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997), pp. 1–2 and the bibliography in note 4.

[216] J. Baldick, *Mystical Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989), p. 57.

[217] Nwyia, "Makzūn al-Sinjārī, poète mystique alaouite", *Studia Islamica*, 40 (1974), pp. 98–99.

cal Shīʿism and converted to Nuṣayrism. This Ṣūfī tendency towards Shīʿism was more characteristic of the Ṣūfī orders of Iran and central Asia in later periods. The best example is the Safawid dynasty in Iran in the sixteenth century. Thus, the case of al-Makzūn seems to be one of the earliest examples of the complex connection between Ṣūfism and Shīʿism.[218]

As for the issue of the elimination of the rival Isḥāqiyya sect by al-Makzūn, a comparison of two Muslim texts, written before and after the period of al-Makzūn, may shed some light. In the book of al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), *al-Milal wa-'l-niḥal*, there is a chapter explaining the beliefs of the Nuṣayriyya and the Isḥāqiyya.[219] But in *Kitāb al-rawḍatayn* of Abū Shāma (d. 666/1267) mentions among the sects in Syria the Nuṣayrīs, the Druzes and the Ḥashīshiyya (the Nizārīs), but not the Isḥāqiyya.[220]

Although medieval sources are silent concerning al-Makzūn, there is no doubt that circumstances enabled his success. The permanent wars between the Ayyubids and the Crusaders, as well as the terror of the Nizārīs, devastated all three warring sides. It is this chronic instability in Syria and the absence of a strong Muslim control in the regions conquered by Salāḥ al-Dīn that permitted a certain degree of autonomy of the Nuṣayrīs in the Jabal. According to Nuṣayrī popular tradition, al-Makzūn brought a thousand of his warriors to Syria. These people, who enlarged the sect's population considerably, are regarded as the ancestors of most of the present-day ʿAlawī clans in Syria.[221] According to al-Ṭawīl, most of the clans that came from Sinjār

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[218] V. J. Cornell, *Voices of Islam* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), pp. 223–224; S. H. Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1973), pp. 104–122.

[219] Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-'l-niḥal* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992), pp. 192–193.

[220] Abū Shāma, *Kitāb al-rawḍatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn al-Nūriyya wa-'l-Ṣalāḥiya* (Cairo: al-Muʾassasa 'l-Miṣriyya 'l-ʿĀmma, 1962), vol. 1, p. 510.

[221] Shaykh Yūnus wrote in his conclusion: "The Sanājira [the family of al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī] today form the majority of the ʿAlawīs"; see A. A. ʿAli, *Maʿrifat Allāh*, vol. 2, p. 349. Concerning the actual factions in the Nuṣayrī-Alawī sect in theology (Shamaliyya, Kalāziyya, Ghaybiyya and Ḥaydariyya) and in clans (Khayyāṭīn, Haddādīn, Matāwira, Darāwisa, Mahārisa and Kalbiyya), see *TA*, pp. 529–531; Halm, "Nuṣayriyya", p. 149; Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 41–42, note 1. About the clans, see F. I. Khuri, "The Alawis of Syria: Religious ideology and organization", in R. T. Antoun and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria*: *Society, Culture and Polity* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 60–61.

settled in Jabala. These people were characterized as brave warriors.[222] These facts would later on have a significant impact on the events of the fourteenth century in this specific town. The brief revival of the sect in the time of al-Makzūn ended with the invasion of the Mamlūks led by Baybars (d. 676/1277).

10. *Oppression under the Mamlūks*

The events of the beginning of the thirteenth century marked a new era of stability in the Muslim world. The new ruling power that arose in Egypt, the Mamlūks, gained a strong grip in the region of Syria. After repelling the Mongol invasion at ʿAyn Jālūt in 659/1260, Baybars put an end to the Ismāʿīlī–Nizārī presence in Syria and also to that of the Crusaders in the coastal regions by the end of the century. Nevertheless, the Mamlūks granted stability only to those who followed their own religious beliefs. They defended Sunnī Muslims, while Shīʿī groups were severely persecuted. The most vulnerable were the Shīʿī sects that had survived up to this period, mainly the Druzes and the Nuṣayrīs.

10.1 *First attempt to convert the Nuṣayrīs*

The conclusion of the historical survey describes the Mamlūk attempt to liquidate the Nuṣayrīs, the response of the sect to that attempt, and the reasons for its eventual survival. In contrast to the issues dealt with thus far, Mamlūk policy towards the Nuṣayrī sect has been well covered in previous studies. René Dussaud and Samuel Lyde both give interesting explanations for the exceptional events of this period. The more recent studies of Urbain Vermeulen and Sato Tsugitaka concerning the town of Jabala contribute to the covering and comprehension of the events. Tsugitaka notes that the Mamlūk conquest of Syria was followed by a cadastral survey, to enable preparation for the distribution of the *iqṭāʿ* to the leading warriors.[223] The conclusions of the survey were economic as well as religious. The territory was to be divided into districts, and the local sects had to embrace Sunnī Islam. Baybars himself ordered that mosques should be built in every Nuṣayrī village.

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[222] *TA*, pp. 416–417, 426–427.

[223] S. Tsugitaka, *The Syrian Coastal Town of Jabal: Its History and Present Situation* (Tokyo: Meikei Printing, 1988), p. 64.

Taxes were to be raised from the local villagers and the drinking of wine was prohibited. Initiation into the Nuṣayrī religion, the *khiṭāb*, was forbidden. The Nuṣayrīs were thus divided into separate districts and were obliged to use the new mosques for public prayer instead of practising their intimate secret cult in private houses. They had to pay heavy taxes to their new *iqṭāʿ* landlords and could not use wine for their mystical prayers. The most severe edict of all was the abolition of the *khiṭāb*, which meant the end of initiation into the esoteric religion or, in other words, the elimination of the Nuṣayrī sect.[224]

The attempt of Baybars to convert the Nuṣayrīs seems odd if we compare it with his determined elimination of the Nizārīs. The Nuṣayrīs could not stand against the power that had defeated the Mongols. One should therefore ask why the Mamlūks preferred to convert them rather than liquidate them in one raid. In order to answer this question, we should complete the account of the relationship between the Nuṣayrīs and the ruling Mamlūks.

The enforcement of mosque building in the Nuṣayrī villages was not enough to convert the members of the sect. It seems that Baybars underestimated the devotion of the Nuṣayrīs to their religion. Since the orders to convert the sect were renewed following the cadastral survey of 717/1317, it is reasonable to assume that the attempt of Baybars some 50 years earlier was unsuccessful. The account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, according to which the Nuṣayrīs used the mosques for their cattle,[225] may not be historically accurate; no other historian of that period mentions it. This is an example of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's well-known ironic style used as means to denounce the Mamlūks and to explain their failure to convert the Nuṣayrīs.

10.2 *The uprising of the Nuṣayrī mahdī*

The second attempt to convert the Nuṣayrīs and to raise taxes from their lands took place in the *wilāya* (district) of Tripoli, which

[224] Ibid., pp. 63–66; Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, p. 27. Both base their account mainly on chronicles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See, for example, ʿUmar ibn al-Muẓafar ibn al-Wardī, *Taʾrīkh Ibn al-Wardī* (Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa ʾl-Ḥaydariyya, 1969), vol. 2, p. 380; Taqī ʾl-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa-'l-Tarjama wa-'l-Nashr, 1971), vol. 2. pp. 174–175; also the traveler Shams al-Dīn ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharāʾib al-amṣār wa-ʿajāʾib al-asfār* (Rabāt: Maṭbūʿāt Akadīmiyyat al-Mamlaka ʾl-Maghribiyya, 1977), p. 291. On the *khiṭāb*, see Chapter 3, 4.4.

[225] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār*, p. 291.

included the regions of Jabala and Lādhiqiyya. This Mamlūk initiative was counteracted by a strong uprising led by a Nuṣayrī leader from the region of Jabala in 717/1317. While Tsugitaka sees the religious prohibitions as the main reason for the Nuṣayrī uprising,[226] Vermeulen tends to view it as a social revolt of the peasants against the landlords.[227] We can assume that both reasons, religious and economic, played an important role in this uprising. Nevertheless, a review of the sect's development requires a preliminary investigation as to the reason for this outstanding phenomenon in Nuṣayrī history. Since the time of the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in the eighth century, most of the Shīʿīs, including the Nuṣayrīs, believed in *quʿūd* (a passive expectation of a savior) and entrusted the *khurūj* (the war against the infidels) to the *mahdī* at the end of time. Indeed, al-Makzūn's expedition was an exception. It should be seen as the external intervention of a foreign leader who had been converted to Nuṣayrism. It was not viewed by the sect as an attack initiated against the sect's enemies, but as a migration process followed by a defensive military expedition.

Dussaud proposes that the *mahdī* uprising was the result of the influence of the violent and messianic natures of the Nizārīs who ruled in the Jabal for a decade.[228] However, his logical hypothesis cannot explain where the Nuṣayrī warriors came from. It was perhaps rather that the uprising took place specifically in Jabala because it was the main place in which the warriors of al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī had been concentrated a century before. The local members of the sect not only shared a tradition of fighters but were probably closer to the *jihād* ideology of al-Makzūn than Nuṣayrīs in other regions.

According to several Muslim sources, the mysterious *mahdī* came from the castle of Qirṭyāwūs near Jabala.[229] The Christian Syriac historian Bar-Hebreaus (d. 685/1286) was the only one to claim that the Nuṣayrī *mahdī* appeared from Balāṭunos (in the source Beladnoos).[230] This last account proves that a Nuṣayrī community, which had lived

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[226] Tsugitaka, *The Syrian Coastal Town of Jabala*, p. 66 and *Muslim Societies: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 3–6.

[227] U. Vermeulen, "Some remarks on a rescript of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāʾūn on the abolition of taxes and the Nuṣayris (Mamlaka of Tripoli, 717/1317)", *Orientalis Lovaniensia Periodica* I (1970), pp. 195–201.

[228] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, p. 23.

[229] Ibid., p. 24; Tsugitaka, *The Syrian Coastal Town of Jabala*, p. 61.

[230] See the translation of Lyde, *Asian Mystery*, p. 71. On Bar-Hebraeus, see a recent publication: H. Takahashi, *Barhebraeus: A Bio-bibliography* (Piskataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2003).

there from the period of the Banū ’l-Aḥmar in the eleventh century, still existed in this place and probably joined the rebellion of 717/1317.

The uprising was most likely a local event, because Nuṣayrīs from other regions did not join it. It seems that it was not backed by a majority of the sect’s shaykhs, which is the reason that it was not recorded in any of the Nuṣayrī sources or in the popular tradition. The sect’s religious leaders were probably shocked by the public declaration of secret beliefs and the violent means of the *mahdī*, who brought disaster to the community in Jabala. The contemporary historian Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) described the events as follows:

> In this year (717/1317) the Nuṣayriyya became disobedient, and among them was a man whom they called Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, the *mahdī*, executor of Allāh’s orders [*al-Qāʾim bi-Amrillāh*, identical to the Fātimid Caliph’s title] and sometimes they called him ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib creator of heavens and earth…At other times he claimed that he was [the Prophet] Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh, Lord of the Land. He rebelled, claiming that the Muslims were infidels and the Nuṣayrīs possessed the truth. This man had influence upon many of the leading Nuṣayrīs, to whom he gave command over a thousand [warriors], lands and positions. They raided the town of Jabala, entered and killed a certain number of its habitants, and left it declaring that: “There is no God but ʿAlī, and no veil [*ḥijāb*] but Muḥammad and there is no gate [*bāb*] but Salmān”. They took two [Muslim] shaykhs and the inhabitants of the city cried: “Alas to Islam, oh sultan! oh *amīr!*” But on that day they did not have any savior and they cried and begged the mighty and exalted God. This heretic collected his spoils and distributed it to his commanders and his followers, may God curse them all! He told them that there is nothing left of the Muslims…He ordered his commanders to ruin the mosques and to turn them into wine taverns. When they caught a Muslim they forced him to say: “There is no God but ʿAlī and bow to your Lord the *mahdī* who gives life and puts to death”, or else they would kill him…They equipped themselves [for another raid] but troops were launched against them, defeated them, killed a great number of people among them, and the *mahdī* was killed.[231]

The account of a later historian, al-Maqrīzī (d. 846/1442) adds more odd details:

> On 17 [a sacred number in Nuṣayrī theology] Dhū ’l-Qaʿda a man from the village of Qirṭyāwūs in the district of Jabala claimed that he was Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, the *mahdī*, and that while he was plowing in his field, suddenly a white bird came to him and made a hole in the side

[231] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya waʾ-l-nihāya*, vol. 14, p. 83.

> of his body through which he took out his soul and inserted the soul of Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan [al-ʿAskarī, i.e. the twelfth and last Imām]. Some 5,000 Nuṣayrīs joined him [3,000 according to al-Dhahabī].[232] He ordered them to prostrate themselves before him, which they did. He permitted them to drink wine and to abandon prayer. He declared that: "There is no God but ʿAlī, and no veil but Muḥammad [the third aspect is missing here]". They held red flags and a big candle with burning flames,[233] which was held by a young man who claimed he was Ibrāhīm ibn Adham and that he [the *mahdī*] resurrected him, and he called his brother al-Miqdād ibn Aswad al-Kindī, and called another person "[the Angel] Gabriel"... he attacked Jabala in Friday, killed, took captives and revealed his heresy, and he cursed [the two first caliphs] Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, God bless them. Then the governor of Tripoli, Amīr Shihāb al-Dīn Qirṭāy sent an army of 1,000 cavalry headed by Amīr Badr al-Dīn Bīlīk [or Baylīk]. He fought them until he [the *mahdī*] was killed. His uprising [*khurūj*] took five days.[234]

The mystical symbols in the story of the Nuṣayrī *mahdī* have never been studied, perhaps because some of them are strange even according to the sect's own doctrines. The abolition of Islamic law is known from the history of the Ḥashīshiyyūn.[235] Other symbols in the story of the Nuṣayrī *mahdī* do not belong to Ismāʿīlī mysticism. The tradition of the white bird carrying the *mahdī*'s soul can be traced to two different traditions: Zoroastrian–Muslim syncretism[236] and Ṣūfī mysticism.[237]

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[232] Tsugitaka, *The Syrian Coastal Town of Jabala*, pp. 61–62.

[233] Since there does not seem to be a suitable translation for *bi-'l-hār*, it is possibly an error of the copyist in the last letter and it was originally *bi-alhāb*. This translation seems more logical than Tsugitaka's proposal, "burning as brightly as day", supposing that *bi-'l-hār* was originally *bi-'l-nahār*.

[234] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, vol. 2, pp. 174–175.

[235] Lewis, *The Assassins*, p. 128. About the belief of the Ismāʿīlīs in the abolition of Islamic law in the time of the *mahdī*'s appearance and Muslim accusations of antinomianism, see H. Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. M. Bonner (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 21–22.

[236] In the *Shahnameh* of the Seljuk Sultan Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), there is an account of a rebellion by one of Abū Muslim's followers who tried to revenge his murder. The rebel, a certain magician called Sinbādh, claimed that when the ʿAbbāsid caliph was about to execute Abū Muslim, commander of Khurasan, he escaped by turning into a white dove and soaring to the heavens, where he was seated by the *mahdī* and Mazdak (founder of a sixth-century Zoroastrian proto-socialist philosophy). See H. Darke (trans.), *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 207; P. Holsworth, *A History of Persia* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 560–561. On Mazdak and Mazdakizm, see E. Yarshater, "Mazdakiza", *Cambridge History of Iran*, III (1983), pp. 991–1024.

[237] The story of the *mahdī*'s uprising contains two Ṣūfī elements. In his account of the uprising, al-Maqrīzī noted that one of the *mahdī*'s followers claimed to be Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, one of the early Ṣūfīs of the eighth century from Balkh who was buried

The Nuṣayrī use of the white bird could be a negation of the symbol of the black raven in the tradition of the Ghurābiyya (sect of the ravenṣ, a rival Ghulāt sect.[238]

There are traces in Nuṣayrī writings of other accusations of heresy mentioned in the account of the uprising. The *shahāda* (declaration of belief) repeated by the *mahdī*'s followers concerning the three divine aspects, the consideration of ʿAlī and his follower al-Miqdād as parts of the divinity, and the curse of the first two caliphs, all reflect a superficial Sunnī understanding of some Nuṣayrī doctrines. A typical example of this facile understanding of the sect's mystical doctrines is the *fatwā* of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The fact that such doctrines were revealed means that the *mahdī* permitted himself to abolish the *taqiyya*, as if the end of time had come.

In the account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, we find significant additional information about the uprising. The *mahdī* said that the angels would defend him. Then he promised his followers that when they fought, their branches of myrtle would turn into swords.[239] This promise can be traced back to a well-known Ghulāt tradition from the time of Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb's uprising in Kufa in the eighth century.[240]

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in Syria; see M. Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 94–96. In addition, the symbol of the white bird was used by Ṣūfī mystics in the period of the Nuṣayrī *mahdi*. It is said that the Ṣūfī leader Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) saw an angel in the form of a white bird; see J. Renard and A. Schimmel (trans.), *Ibn ʿAbbād of Ronda: Letters on the Sufi Path* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 53. The Ṣūfī ʿUmar ibn al-Farīd (d. 632/1235) saw white birds attending the funeral of one of his shaykhs; see E. Homerin, *ʿUmar ibn al-Farīd: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001). Another well-known Ṣūfī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (d. 672/1273), used the bird in a poem he wrote as a symbol of the Angel Gabriel; see W. C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Path of Rumi* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 96.

[238] The Ghurābiyya were a Ghulāt sect who claimed that the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to ʿAlī but confused him with Muḥammad, because they were as similar as two ravens. Thus, they curse Gabriel and the Prophet Muḥammad as well. See al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna 'l-firaq*, p. 239. This sect still existed in Syria in the time of Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217), the Andalusian traveler. According to his description of Syria, the Shīʿīs were more numerous than the Sunnīs during the time he traveled there. Among the Shīʿī groups, those he considered most heretical were the Ismāʿīliyya, the Nuṣayriyya ("who regard ʿAlī as God"), and the Ghurābiyya; see Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Jubayr, *Risālat iʿtibār al-nāsik fī dhikr al-āthār al-karīma wa-'l-manāsik* (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1986), p. 227.

[239] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār*, p. 292.

[240] In Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb's uprising, he promised his followers that when they fought their canes would turn into lances and the enemy's swords and lances would not harm them; see al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, p. 70.

10.3 *A deadly* fatwā *of Ibn Taymiyya*

Ibn Taymiyya, a respected but controversial theologian of the Ḥanbalī school[241] of Sunnism, was the first to issue a *fatwā* (see in detail in Chapter 3 and Appendix 8) against the Nuṣayrīs and to determine that they are not Muslims and should be annihilated. His *fatwā* was the only one issued in the Middle Ages and it was not echoed by others. It is true that the negative opinion concerning the sect was shared by other Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, as shown in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, we should ask ourselves why such a dramatic step was taken specifically in this period, five decades after the emergence of the Nuṣayrī sect.

The historical background bears the answer to the question. The policy of the Mamlūks was extreme in many aspects. They had liquidated the Nizārīs and removed the Mongol menace. Finally, they put an end to the Crusader presence in Syria, even at the cost of the destruction of every Crusader castle, settlement and port in the coastal territories, to prevent their reconquest.[242]

The policy towards the Nuṣayrīs was extreme as well. Orders arrived from the Sultan in Egypt to eliminate them following the *mahdī*'s uprising. We do not know if this order was meant to be executed in Jabala, in the Tripoli district, or even in all of Syria. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa reported that after the uprising a punitive attack was initiated by the Mamlūk *amīr* of Tripoli, in which some 20,000 members of the sect were killed and others fled to the Jabal.[243]

It may be assumed that the *mahdī*'s policy was not accepted among the majority of the sect, which did not join him. It seems that the Nuṣayrī shaykhs decided to take responsible measures in order to save the sect from total extermination. Knowing that they were not considered Muslim by the Sunnī authorities, the Nuṣayrī leaders asked at least to be included among the *ahl al-kitāb*, i.e. monotheist communities under Muslim rule. As such they would pay the *jizya* (poll tax), but because of their low economic status, they would be asked to pay the minimum tax obligated by the *sharīʿa*, of one dinar per person.[244]

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[241] Regarding Ibn Taymiyya and his problematic character, see H. Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya", *EI*² III (1971), pp. 951–955.

[242] See, for example, C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 445–446.

[243] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār*, p. 292.

[244] For the regulations of the *jizya*, see, for example, J. E. Lindsay, *Daily Life in the Islamic World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005), p. 121.

Indeed, according to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa the Nuṣayrīs (he does not specify who exactly) wrote to the *amīr* of Tripoli, promising they would pay a poll tax of one dinar per person if he would spare their lives.[245]

Dussaud's hypothesis that in his *fatwā* Ibn Taymiyya forbade the relationships that were taking place in everyday life between Muslims and Nuṣayrīs means that we can learn from these prohibitions about the reality of the time. The *fatwā* reveals that the Nuṣayrīs were a productive and devoted community, cultivated their lands, fought together with the other Muslims against foreign invaders, and even married local Muslims and were buried beside them. Thus, the *fatwā*'s application was not realistic.[246] Dussaud's hypothesis is supported by Bar-Hebraeus's account of the resistance of the sect against the Crusaders at the end of the eleventh century. In their passage between Mount Lebanon and Tripoli, the Franks killed a great number of Nuṣayrīs.[247] Dussaud's view is also backed by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's explanation of the survival of the sect after the uprising of the *mahdī*:

> A pigeon post transmitted the news [concerning the uprising in Jabala] and al-Malik al-Nāṣir [Mamlūk Sultan of Egypt, d. 741/1341] sent his answer that they were all to be liquidated. Then the great *amīr* [of Tripoli] wrote to back him explaining that they [the Nuṣayrīs] were working for the Muslims by plowing the land, and if they were killed it would weaken the Muslims. Thus he [the Sultan] ordered their lives to be spared.[248]

Ibn Taymiyya's efforts were in vain since economic interests were more important to the Mamlūks than religious obligations. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya was seen as a fanatic scholar by the Mamlūk authorities themselves. We are told, for example, by the historian Ibn al-Wardī that twelve years before the uprising, in the events of the year 705/1305, Ibn Taymiyya was asked by the Mamlūks to accompany an attack against the Nuṣayrīs of al-Ẓanīnayn and to launch a *fatwā* against them. Nevertheless, immediately after that task, he was called to Damascus to be investigated by a committee of *ʿulamāʾ* who accused him of anthropomorphism (*tajsīm*). He was jailed as a result.[249]

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[245] Ibid.

[246] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 29–31.

[247] E. A. W. Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l-Faraj 1225–1286* (Amsterdam: Apa-Philo Press, 1932), vol. 1, p. 235.

[248] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār*, p. 292.

[249] Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn al-Wardī, *Taʾrīkh Ibn al-Wardī* (Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyya, 1969), vol. 2, p. 363.

Little is known of the history of the sect after the fifteenth century and prior to the nineteenth century. We know about other Nuṣayrī leaders from their poetical works, but we do not have enough information to date their activities. One example is Shaykh Ḥasan al-Ajrūd from ʿĀna, who lived in the fifteenth century, according to the problematic book of al-Ṭawīl.[250] Massignon thought that this poet lived around 836/1433.[251] However, we have no additional information concerning him. A study of these obscure four centuries is yet to be undertaken.

11. *Nuṣayrī medieval history—a chronological table*

Second half of the ninth century

Claim of Ibn Nuṣayr from Basra that he is the *bāb* of the tenth and eleventh Imāms, ʿAlī al-Hādī (d. 254/868) and Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/873). Backing of his community by Banū ʾl-Furāt

Split of Isḥāq al-Aḥmar from the Numayriyya/Namīriyya

End of the ninth century

Transmission of the leadership of the sect to Muḥammad ibn Jundab, then to ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān from Junbulāʾ

Initiation of al-Khaṣībī to the Numayriyya/Namīriyya by al-Jannān

314/926

al-Khaṣībī's second mystical guidance by ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad in Ṭurbāʾ

314–333/926–945

al-Khaṣībī's public preaching in Baghdad and his arrest

His mysterious escape and his immigration to Syria

Foundation of the first center of the sect in Ḥarrān, including 51 members

334/945

The Buyids seize power in Baghdad, al-Khaṣībī's return to Iraq

[250] *TA*, pp. 376–378. His only available poems are in Ms. Paris 1540, fol. 175b-176b. They are studied in C. Huart, "La poésie religieuse des Nuṣayrīs", *Journal Asiatique* 14 (1879), p. 255.

[251] Massignon, "Esquisse", p. 647, item 39.

ʿIzz al-Dīn Bakhtiyār is praised in a panegyric of al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī
Dedication of al-Khaṣībī's *Rāst Bāsh* to Bakhtiyār

336/947
al-Khaṣībī's visit to his 140 disciples in Ṭurbāʾ

340/951
al-Jisrī's compilation of his catechism with al-Khaṣībī in his *majlis*, containing Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh

344/956
al-Khaṣībī's use of *taqiyya* to pose as an Imāmī scholar
al-Khaṣībī's *ijāza* to Hārūn ibn Mūsā al-Talʿakbarī in Kufa

Middle of the tenth century
al-Jisrī's appointment as leader of the sect in Baghdad
Return of al-Khaṣībī to Syria and establishment of a new center of the sect in Aleppo, backed by the Ḥamdanids
Dedication of *al-Hidāya al-kubrā* to Sayf al-Dawla
al-Khaṣībī's appointment of al-Jillī as his successor in Aleppo

358/969
Death of al-Khaṣībī in Aleppo

370/980
Catechism between al-Jillī and his disciple al-Ṭabarānī in Beirut

First half of the eleventh century
al-Ṭabarānī's leadership of the sect
Theological activity of the Banū Shuʿba of Ḥarrān

398/1007
Transmission of the first tradition from *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* to al-Ṭabarānī in Tripoli

421–422/1030
Patronage of the Banū 'l-Aḥmar of Balāṭunos to the Nuṣayrīs of the Jabal

Middle of the eleventh century
Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī reports about a Nuṣayrī center in Tiberias
The Druze leader Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī's epistle attacking the Nuṣayrīs

Beginning of twelfth century
Patronage of the Banū Muḥriz of Marqab to the Nuṣayrīs of the region of Tripoli (until 511/1117)
Travel and theological debates of Shaykh al-Nashshābī in Muslim territories of Syria

584/1188
Salāḥ al-Dīn's conquest of the Jabal, after a century of separation of the Nuṣayrīs between Frankish and Muslim territories

End of eleventh century–beginning of twelfth century
Nizārī dominance over the Nuṣayrīs of the Jabal

619–638/1222–1240
Raid of Amīr Makzūn al-Sinjārī and his army in order to save the Nuṣayrīs from the Nizārīs and the Kurds. Makzūn's liquidation of the rival *Isḥāqiyya*

659/1260
Baybars's conquest of Syria and the first attempt to convert the Nuṣayrīs to Sunnism

717/1317
A Mamlūk order to convert the Nuṣayrīs is repeated following the cadastral survey of the district of Tripoli. Augmentation of taxes and prohibition of initiation into Nuṣayrīsm
Failure of the uprising of the Nuṣayrī *mahdī* in Jabala, crushed by the commander of Tripoli

Fourteenth century, before 728/1328
A *fatwā* of Ibn Taymiyya against the Nuṣayrīs, determining that they are not Muslims
Nuṣayrī leaders' correspondence with the *amīr* of Tripoli to spare their lives and to pay a poll tax
A Mamlūk decision to let the Nuṣayrīs live in order to cultivate the lands

CHAPTER TWO

THE NUṢAYRĪ RELIGION

The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī religious system is a crystallized mixture of ideas that was developed for two centuries in mystical circles of the Shīʿa. It was created in a region in which Islam and the Hellenistic and Persian cultures came into contact with each other. The understanding of their syncretistic theology demands an artificial organization of their traditions, since there is no systematic order in the majority of the sect's religious writings. This organization is based on ideas repeated in the available Nuṣayrī manuscripts, which basically consist of disparate collections of traditions. There are some exceptions, such as the important *Majmūʾ al-aʾyād*, in which the traditions are arranged by holidays. Most of the material from the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* is edited in a disorganized manner. The sources included in the *Silsila* enable us to take a significant step towards a better understanding of the Nuṣayrī religion and its sources.

Significant progress has been made in the research on Nuṣayrī doctrines during the past decade. The most remarkable work in this field was made recently in Bar-Asher and Kofsky's *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*. But their study represents merely a collection of articles, each one focusing on one specific manuscript. Despite the undoubted contribution of their work, it cannot be seen as exhaustive. The study does not cover the totality of the Nuṣayrī writings, and in most cases it also lacks a broader religious context. The aim in this chapter is to complete the important work of Bar-Asher and Kofsky by presenting the Nuṣayrī religion based on all the available sources of the sect, with the significant addition of the new sources of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*. In addition, an attempt is made to trace the components of the syncretistic beliefs of the sect, which can be found in some of the surrounding religions, mainly Islam, Judaism, Christianism, Greek philosophy and Zoroastrianism, as well as other mystic groups in the medieval Muslim world.

1. *Western research on the Nuṣayrī religion*

Since the publications in Arabic concerning the Nuṣayrīs represent negative and positive (or apologetic) propaganda rather than objective research, the focus here is on the evolution of the main Western works in this field.

The pioneers in the study of the Nuṣayrī religion in the nineteenth century were scholars, members of the French Société Asiatique and of the American Oriental Society, diplomats who served under European representatives in the Middle East, and Christian missionaries. Earlier, some brief reports on the sect were written by adventurers and travelers who passed through Jabal Anṣariyya. The first researchers of the sect published academic papers every time they discovered a new text of the sect. Their research was a combination of their discovery with their previous knowledge of Muslim heresiography. Most of the studies in this field were made by French researchers. Antoine Sylvestre de Sacy wrote a chapter concerning the Nuṣayrīs, in his *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*, based on a polemical epistle written by the main Druze propagandist, Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī.[1] The British Reverend Samuel Lyde based his work on *Kitāb al-mashyakha*, the original of which is lost today.[2] René Dussaud relied mainly on Sulaymān al-Adhanī's *Bākūra*.[3] Sylvestre de Sacy and Lyde tended to view Nuṣayrī syncretism as a combination of Greek and Persian influences. According to their hypothesis, the Muslims inherited the doctrines of the two conquered civilizations: the Hellenistic–Byzantine in the west and the Sassanid–Persian in the east.[4]

However, Dussaud preferred to emphasize the influence of pagan societies that had been situated since antiquity in the region where the sect's members were concentrated. Since there is a lack of information regarding the precise number of conversions to Christianity and Islam in the medieval period, the possibility of the existence of a

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[1] De Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*, II pp. 559–586.

[2] Extracts of the *Manual for Sheikhs*, translated into English, in Lyde, *Asian Mystery*, pp. 233–269.

[3] Translated into French in Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 161–179. See also Ignaz Goldziher's review of Dussaud's monograph, including his remarks and corrections of the translation, in "Über Dussaud, Histoire et religion des Nuṣairīs", *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* (Tubingen and Leipzig: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1901), pp. 85–95.

[4] Lyde, *Asian Mystery*, pp. 54, 76–77.

pagan society even in the tenth–eleventh centuries cannot be excluded. Dussaud's assumption was that the sect had existed in the Jabal Anṣariyya long before the emergence of Islam, and that even after converting to Shīʿism, it preserved Phoenician doctrines that were influenced by Greek philosophy.[5] In order to back his theory, he tried to prove the influence upon the sect of the mysterious Sabeans of Harrān, another society that survived until the late medieval period.[6]

Another theory concerning the origins of the Nuṣayrī religion was proposed by Christian priests and missionaries who dwelt in Syria during the nineteenth century. Lyde cites missionaries who claimed that the Nuṣayrīs adopted a Gnostic Christianity, which the Orthodox churches considered heretical.[7] Henri Lammens regarded the sect as a lost isolated Christian community which, over the centuries, had lost its original beliefs and adopted instead mystical Shīʿism and local Syrian superstitions.[8]

In the twentieth century, important progress was made in research on the Nuṣayrī sect, again by a French researcher. Louis Massignon's work in this field marks a fundamental change in the use of sources. From his period onward, the system of basing a study on one single source was discarded. In his article in the first *Encyclopedia of Islam* and his *Bibliographie nusayrie*, Massignon mentions almost all the Nuṣayrī sources known today.[9] Moreover, he never relied on oral testimony, as did his predecessors. In this way he avoided being misled

[5] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 14, 17–18, 82. This hypothesis of pagan influence was maintained also by R. Basset; see his entry "Nusayris", in J. Hastings (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethnics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), vol. 9, pp. 417–419.

[6] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 20, 44–45.

[7] Lyde, *Asian Mystery*, pp. 49–50.

[8] Lammens, "Les Noṣairīs furent-ils chrétiens? A propos d'un livre récent", *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 5 (1900), pp. 33–50.

[9] See Massignon's bibliography in: "Nuṣairī", *EI* vi, p. 966; L. Massignon, "Esquisse d'une bibliographie nusayrie", *Opera Minora* I (1936), pp. 640–649. Although Massignon mentions the majority of the Nuṣayrī sources we know today, it seems that he did not use most of them since he cites only a few in his large four-volume series *La Passion de Husayn ibn Mansūr al-Hallāj: martyre mystique de l'Islam executé à Baghdad le 26 Mars 922: étude d'histoire religieuse*, trans. H. Mason, *The Passion of al-Hallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982). Although in his "Esquisse" Massignon claims to be at an advanced stage of his "Guide to Alawī literature", it seems that French political involvement in Syria in the 1920s and 1930s prevented the eventual fulfillment of his goal, as evidenced by his cautious promise not to publish his future project without the prior permission of the ʿAlawī shaykhs; see Massignon, "Esquisse", p. 640.

by the sect's members who were following the obligation of *taqiyya*. The most important change in Massignon's system is the adoption of what may be called an internal attitude. By this is meant an approach that regards Nuṣayrī syncretism as the result of a development inside the Shīʿa, rather than what may be termed an external attitude, which sees it as an influence from some external, non-Muslim religion or from paganism.

The next step in this research was led by German scholars such as Rudolf Strothmann, followed by Heinz Halm, who contributed tremendously to the definition of the Nusayrī religion system. Strothmann's critical edition of al-Ṭabarānī's *Majmūʾ al-aʾyād* (see Appendix 1) and Halm's studies of the transmission of Nuṣayrī traditions[10] and the Gnosticism of the Ghulāt,[11] are crucial tools for any research in the field. The work of these two researchers promoted the internal attitude, to the point of considering all Nuṣayrī doctrines as a final development of the Shīʿī mysticism of Kufa. However, a different approach was advanced lately in the works of two Israelis, Meir Bar-Asher and Arieh Kofsky. Their study, which focuses on Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1449 and 1450, raises new assumptions. Their research led to the conclusion that Christianity had a major influence on the sect's doctrines.[12] In a recent paper, Bar-Asher also emphasizes the Iranian influence on the early Nuṣayrī traditions.[13] The work of Bar-Asher and Kofsky may indicate a new trend of research, which marks a return to the external attitude.

The aim here is to combine several systems of research and views concerning the origins of the Nuṣayrī religion rather than rejecting old trends. The existence of Persian, Christian, as well as pagan elements, in the Nuṣayrī manuscripts is undeniable, but equally they display internal religious evolution within the Shīʿī Ghulāt of Kufa. The historical account of the sect is the main tool in understanding the development of the Nuṣayrī religion: Nuṣayrīsm is a mystical version

[10] H. Halm, "Nuṣayriyya," *EI*[2] VIII (1995), pp. 148–150; "Das Buch der Schatten: Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der Ġulāt und die Ursprünge des Nusairiertums," *Der Islam* 55 (1975), pp. 224–258; 58 (1981), pp. 15–86.

[11] H. Halm, *Die Islamische Gnosis: Die extreme Schia und die ʿAlawiten* (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1982). The recent translation of this book into Arabic is used here: *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām* (Cologne: al-Kamel Verlag, 2003).

[12] See, for example, Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nusayrī-ʾAlawī Religion*, pp. 73–74.

[13] M. Bar-Asher, "The Iranian component of the Nuṣayrī religion", *Iran* XLI (2003), pp. 217–227.

of Shīʿism advocated by the Numayriyya/Namīrīyya of Ibn Nuṣayr in the ninth century, renewed by another group led by al-Khaṣībī in the tenth century. The sect was born in Basra, Kufa and Baghdad, a milieu that was subject to Persian influence. Some members of the sect played a role in linking the sect with Persian thinkers in the period of al-Khaṣībī, such as the unknown Abū ʿAlī al-Baṣrī who is cited in Nuṣayrī sources as transmitting mystical traditions in Shīrāz[14] and the poet al-Muntajab who seems to have had contacts with the Buyid leader Bakhtiyār. The strong Iranian influence on the texts of the sect from the tenth century is not only a result of a Shuʿūbī tendency among the Nuṣayrīs, as proposed by Bar-Asher.[15] It is also a result of the coincidence of the creation of the sect with the renaissance of Iranian culture in the Buyid state, which Adam Mez called "the renaissance of Islam".[16] Moreover, some older Persian religious groups were not yet converted in the tenth–eleventh century. In Persia and Iraq, Zoroastrianism and Mazdakism were still prominent in that period. Many Persian groups merged Islamic teaching with Iranian religions. This was the case with many Iranians who had converted to Ismāʿīlism.[17] The Shīʿī scholar al-Nawbakhtī (d. 310/912) wrote:

> All these sects of extremism [*ghulūw*] who claim they were supporters of ʿAlī, their source is the Khurramdīniyya, the Mazdakiyya, the Zindīqiyya and the Dahriyya, may Allāh curse them.[18]

Syncretism, which characterizes almost every religion and sect, is a result of two major factors: the converts import their previous beliefs and doctrines into their new religion, which in this case is Shīʿī Islam; at the same time, the religious group is permanently influenced by the beliefs that surround it. The Nuṣayrī religion was created by the combination of the two: a great number of the Ghulāt and Nuṣayrīs were *mawālī*, as were the majority of the Shīʿīs; there are also indications of

[14] Al-Ṭabarānī, *Majmūʿ*, p. 28. Although al-Ṭabarānī refers to Abū ʿAlī, it is unlikely that he was born in his period. Abū ʿAlī's transmission is dated 327/938, in the period of al-Khaṣībī's activity; see M. Bar-Asher, "The Iranian component", pp. 223, 228; Lyde, *The Asian Mystery*, pp. 137–138.

[15] Bar-Asher, "The Iranian component", pp. 219–222.

[16] A. Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. S. Khuda and D. S. Margoliouth (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi 1979).

[17] F. Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 53–55.

[18] Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, p. 46. The first two sects mentioned here are branches of Zoroastrianism, which existed in Iraq and Iran; see Daftary, ibid., pp. 31, 54, 58.

an endeavor to convert people to Nuṣayrism after the sect's migration to Syria. The sect's passage from Iraq to Syria entailed a fundamental change in the two factors that produce syncretism: the original religion of the converts and the external influences. The transition was from a Persian milieu to a Byzantine and Christian scene.

2. *The nature of the divinity*

The understanding of the spiritual world demands from the Nuṣayrī mystic a long process of study of what is called *ʿilm al-tawḥīd* (science of monotheism), since monotheism is the fundamental notion of the Nuṣayrī religion.

The Nuṣayrī concept of divinity reflects Neoplatonic thought. A similar view is held in the Ismāʿīlī religion, which is also based on Neoplatonism. It is an extremely abstract God, from which all creation emanates as light from the sun. The emanations are represented as a series of gradual regressions of created beings, from the more exalted to the more inferior. The further the created being is removed from the source of creation, which is God or Allāh in the case of the Nuṣayrīs, the more it loses perfection. Even inside the divine world there is hierarchy, in accordance with the order of the creation.

The divinity is defined in the Nuṣayrī sources as *anzaʿ baṭīn*, meaning an abstract and mysterious being, incapable of being defined by any human characteristic.[19] He is often called *al-ghayb* (the absence).[20] Thus, the sect's mystics use a negative description of God[21] in order to determine his nature: he has no form, no boundaries, he is not created or incarnated and he never changes his purely spiritual nature; thus all his appearances are in his own essence (*bi-dhātihī*).[22]

God's abstract nature was explained in detail in Mufaḍḍal's *Kitāb al-usūs* and *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ* and in the lost *Kitāb ādāb al-dīn*, by

[19] *RMUF*, p. 11; *MS*, pp. 223–224; *DKH*, fol. 5a, 5b, 6a, 9b.

[20] See, for example, *RN* p. 303; *DKH*, fol. 47a.

[21] Concerning the *theologia negativa*, called *nafy al-ṣifāt* (annulment of the descriptions), see *RTN*, p. 275; or *salb al-ṣifāt* (denial of the descriptionṣ, in *MN*, fol. 186b. See also Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 39.

[22] *HAIH*, pp. 242–253, 258; *MS*, pp. 208; *HAD*, pp. 15, 17, 35, 37; *US*, fol. 3a–4b. In most cases, according to Nuṣayrī tradition, the *maʿnā*, God's most exalted aspect, had seven appearances in time, always in his own essence; see *RMU*, p. 173. One tradition speaks of twelve appearances; see *MB*, p. 205.

Mufaḍḍal's son Muḥammad.[23] In their discussion of the nature of the divinity, Nuṣayrī writers also often cite Muḥammad ibn Sinān's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* and Ibn Nuṣayr's *al-Mithāl wa-'l-ṣūra*. This purification (*tanzīh*)[24] of the divinity of all attributes emphasizes the Nuṣayrī effort to attain the state of extreme monotheistic belief. However, the sect's theological writings also contain positive characteristics of the divinity, emphasizing that he is the one and only God, the all-powerful and eternal ruler of the cosmos created by him.[25] He is the most exalted spiritual being in that cosmos, *al-ʿalī al-aʿlā* (the most exalted superior),[26] a term which includes the name of ʿAlī, himself considered the most exalted personification of the deity.

The Nuṣayrīs adopted a typical Neoplatonic explanation of a creator who was never created, hence the comparison of the divinity with the sun, spreading endless light without diminishing anything of itself. This concept of a shining God creating the entire cosmos with his light appears in *Risālat al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar* and is repeated later in Nuṣayrī sources.[27] The attributes given to God are expressed in detail in the *khuṭba* (speech) genre that existed among the mystic Shīʿī circles of the Ghulāt. According to this literature, God introduces himself to humanity by declaring his virtues.

2.1 *The divine triad*

The concept of the divinity is based on the doctrine of emanation. Since the first emanations of God were close to the source of creation, they were the most exalted and powerful spiritual beings who were given the divine task of creating other beings and thus continuing the chain of emanation, of testing the belief of the created beings, and of revealing parts of the mystery of the divinity and concealing others. The first two emanations of the divinity were inferior to the source of creation but were still pure and abstract enough to be considered aspects of the divinity itself. The emanations that came after the source

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[23] See *KU*, fol. 8b–9a and its citation in *KHA* 157–158. The *Ādāb al-dīn* is mentioned in *HAD*, p. 37.

[24] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 101–103.

[25] *KHA*, pp. 157–158, 162; *RN*, p. 303.

[26] *KHA*, p. 204; *DKH*, fol. 18b. See Dussaud's theory concerning this title in *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 51–52.

[27] *RMUF* pp. 11, 12, 16, 17. In Nuṣayrī sources, *RN*, p. 304.

of creation and its first two direct emanations still contained creative abilities transmitted by the divine light but were far inferior to the preceding emanations.

Since the mystical sources preserved by the sect from previous periods, that is proto-Nuṣayrī sources, did not speak of a triad at all, it may be assumed that it was a doctrine established by the Nuṣayrī sect. Older sources conserved by the sect, which were composed by the Ghulāt of the eighth and ninth centuries, speak clearly of two aspects only, the abstract God and his first emanation, a dual concept known also from the Ismāʿīlī doctrine. The first is the *ṣāmit* (silent) and the second is the *nāṭiq* (speaking), who is his representative and his outward aspect.[28] The Nuṣayrīs added a third element to the two aspects of the divinity, which is the *bāb* (door). The addition of this third element is in reaction to the rejection of the mystic role of the *bāb* in Imāmī Shīʿism, a historical process that needs some explanation.

The term *bāb* was used in Shīʿī doctrine to describe the most intimate disciples of the Imāms such as Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar and Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb. Some of them became charismatic leaders of Shīʿī groups, claiming they were the most worthy to interpret the Imām's words. They were never legitimized by the majority of the Shīʿīs but their message was preserved in mystical circles of the Ghulāt. The Imāms kept silent concerning the truth of their *bāb*'s message, or in some instances even excommunicated him openly, if we accept the Imāmī heresiography as reliable.

After the occultation of the twelfth and last Imām, called *al-ghayba al-ṣughrā* (the lesser occultation), between the years 260/874 and 329/941, a struggle began between the new *sufarāʾ* (sing. *safīr*, representative) claiming to represent the hidden Imām and the old mystic *bāb*s. The former represented the moderate stream, the *Shīʿat al-ẓāhir* and the latter the mystical *Shīʿat al-bāṭin*. In this struggle, the winner was the first group headed by the class of the *wukalāʾ* (sing. *wakīl*), the juridical and fiscal representatives of the last Imāms, the Banū ʿAmrī and Banū Nawbakht.[29] They then excommunicated those considered

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[28] Khaṣībī speaks of *maʿnā ṣāmit* and *ism nāṭiq*; see *FRR*, p. 108. The *ism*, the first emanation is "his [God's] speaking tongue" (*lisānuhu al-nāṭiq*); *RB*, p. 274. Concerning these terms in Ismāʿīlī doctrine, see F. Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis*, pp. 53, 219.

[29] Concerning the rich class of the *wukalāʾ*, followed by the *sufarāʾ*, see Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, vol. 1 pp. 306–307; V. Klemm, "The four *sufarāʾ* of the Twelfth Imām: On the formative period of the Twelver Shīʿa" (trans. from German), in E. Kohlberg (ed.), *Shīʿism* (Burlington, Vt:, pp. 135–152).

"exaggerators" (Ghulāt), led by the *bāb*s. Their denunciation was part of the general rejection of the Mufawwiḍa movement and of the belief in *tafwīḍ* (delegation of God's powers to the Imām), and the triumph of the Muqaṣṣira (moderate/deficient Shīʿa) in Shīʿism.[30] From now on, the attribution of divine qualities to the Imām or his *bāb* was limited to the ability to comment on the Qurʾān. In the absence of the Imām there was no room for internal controversies, the Imāmī leadership was the only legitimate head of the Shīʿīs, and the Buyid authorities maintained this rule *de facto*. To sum up, at the political level the *safīr* took the place of the *bāb*, at the theological level the *ʿulamāʾ* (scholars) held authority over the Shīʿī community and rejected the *ʿārifūn* (mystics), and the Muqaṣṣira triumphed over the Mufawwiḍa.

Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr was one of the last mystics who claimed to be a *bāb*, and as such he was excommunicated by the Imāmī *safīr*. His mystical circle was condemned as heretical. The reaction of the Numayriyya/Namīriyya, that continues the legacy of the *bāb*s, was the rejection of the legitimacy of the Imāmī *sufarāʾ* and the declaration of twelve well-known *bāb*s of the twelve Imāms as "doors of God". Indeed, Ibn Nuṣayr appears in the sect's writings as *bāb Allāh wa-walī al-muʾminīn* (the gate of God and leader of believers. Even in his quasi-Imāmī *al-Hidāya al-kubrā*, al-Khaṣībī insists that Ibn Nuṣayr is the *bāb* of the Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, a view which is rejected in orthodox Shīʿism.[31] Since the twelve Imāms were viewed in Nuṣayrī doctrine as personifications of the deity, the twelve chosen *bāb*s were elevated to the level of the gate to the divinity itself. The Nuṣayrīs did not abolish the status of the *safīr*, but declared Ibn Nuṣayr their own *safīr* and attributed to him all the qualities of the *bāb*. The Nuṣayrī *safīr* was more than the Imāmī mediator between the Shīʿī community and a human Imām who had vanished. He was a mediator between the *muwaḥḥidūn* and a divine Imām.[32]

The addition of the third aspect to the divinity may also have had a socio-geographic dimension. Although we cannot speak of dualism or trinity in the monotheistic Nuṣayrī religion, this change from two main aspects of the divinity to three could also reflect the result of the passage from the Iraqi–Persian milieu to the Christian milieu of Syria.

[30] Concerning the relations between *Muqaṣṣira* and *Mufawwiḍa*, see Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, pp. 19–51.
[31] *HK*, p. 323.
[32] *RIA*, p. 297; *MA*, pp. 126–131.

In other words, the possibility cannot be excluded that the evolution of a dual aspect divinity into a divine triad is the result of the migration of the sect from Iraq to Syria—from a zone influenced by Zoroastrianism to a zone influenced by Christianity within the Muslim world.

The three first chapters of *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, an important book for prayer and initiation (see Appendix 1 and 7), may preserve this theological process of the creation of the Nuṣayrī triad. According to al-Adhanī, the first *sūra, al-Awwal* (the first), which is attributed to al-Khaṣībī, mentions only the *maʿnā* ʿAlī. The second *sūra*, *Taqdīsat* [sanctification of] *ibn al-Walī*, which is attributed to al-Jillī, speaks of the *maʿnā* and the *ism*. Only the third *sūra, Taqdīsat ibn Saʿīd*, attributed to al-Ṭabarānī, mentions the three divine aspects: the *maʿnā*, the *ism* and the *bāb*.[33] This structure of the three first chapters of *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* may indicate that a clear concept of a divine triad existed from the time of al-Ṭabarānī who lived in a region influenced by Christianity.

The terminology used to define the aspects of the divine triad seems to derive from existing Shīʿī groups that maintain the cult of three elements in Shīʿī mysticism, the *ʿayn*, the *mīm* and the *sīn*, each representing a subject of adoration: ʿAlī, Muḥammad and Salmān. The main source that indicates the existence of such groups is a mystical book called *Kitāb al-mājid*, written by the ninth-century Shīʿī polymath and philosopher Jābir ibn Ḥayyān.[34] Massignon developed an interesting theory concerning three groups in Kufa, each one promoting the divinity of one of the three divine aspects: the ʿAyniyya, the Mīmiyya and the Sīniyya.[35] The combination of the three elements was not made prior to the tenth century. In this light, Matti Moosa's hypothesis of "the Ghulāt trinity" seems anachronistic since a "trinity" is not to be found prior to the emergence of the Nuṣayrīs and it was not even defined as a trinity (*thālūth*) by the sect before the twelfth century.[36]

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[33] *BS*, pp. 7–9, 10–13.

[34] See the complete version of *Kitāb al-mājid* in Arabic, in P. Kraus, *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān: Essai sur l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam, textes choisis* (Paris: Maisonneuve/Cairo: El-Khandgi, 1935), pp. 115–126.

[35] L. Massignon, *Salmān Pāk et les prémices spirituelles de l'Islam iranien* (Paris: Imprimerie Arrault et Cie, 1934), pp. 35–39.

[36] Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, pp. 50–65. Moosa cites the Sūfī Bektashi and Shabak sources written in later periods. None of his examples from the period of the Ghulāt refer to a triad.

Thus, a divine triad (and not a Christian trinity) was created in the Nuṣayrī religion. The Nuṣayrī sources, without exception, call the three most exalted parts of the divinity: *maʿnā, ism* (also called *ḥijāb*) and *bāb*:

a. The *maʿnā*

Its translation is "meaning". It is the essence (*dhāt*) of the divinity and the source of all emanations. It is the most abstract part of the divinity, on such a high level that it is impossible to determine its nature. Its supremacy is explained by the fact that it is the only entity that was never created. The other two aspects are held to be as eternal as their source, but not pre-existing.[37]

b. The *ism*

The "name" of the divinity is the first emanation of the *maʿnā*. It was created from the divine light of the *maʿnā*. Its first role was to give the creator a definition. It is also called the *ḥijāb* (veil) because of its second role, which is to keep the creator veiled and secret. This task was added to the *ism* in order to punish more inferior creatures after they commited the first sins in the "world of light". The *ism* is separated but not disconnected from the *maʿnā*. According to the Nuṣayrī doctrine, based on Neoplatonism, it flows from the *maʿnā* as "the beams from the circle of the sun" (*ka-'l-shuʿāʾ min al-qurṣ*). By using this explanation, the Nuṣayrīs wish to prevent belief in a dual divinity.[38]

c. The *bāb*

The "gate", the second emanation of the *maʿnā*, was created from the divine light which flowed (*tasalsala*) from the *ism*, and this is why the *bāb* was also called *salsal*.[39] It is the outward aspect of the divinity and is called the "gate" since this is the entity that links the divinity with the mystics. It is through the *bāb* that the Nuṣayrīs could get the *maʿrifa* (gnosis, deep grasp of the spiritual world). The role of this part of the divinity is not clear in the pre-Nuṣayrī Ghulāt texts. For example, in *al-Risāla al-Mufaḍḍaliyya*, the *bāb* does not appear as the third of a divine triad, but as *aʿlā 'l-marātib* (the most exalted of

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37 See, for example, the citation of Ibn Nuṣayr in *KHA*, p. 203.

38 *DMA*, fol. 133a, b. Al-Jillī explains that the *ism* is "not connected or separated" (*lā muttaṣil wa-lā munfaṣil*) from the *maʿnā; RN*, p. 304; compare with the similar explanation in *BS*, p. 18.

39 *RMUF*, p. 12.

the ranks, which are the more inferior emanations of light.[40] In *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ*, the *bāb* is the most exalted rank that can be attained by the mystic, the "gate" to divinity, but it is not part the divinity itself, which is inaccessible.[41]

2.1.1 *Relations between* maʿnā *and* ism

Most of the Nuṣayrī writings deal with the nature of the relations between the three aspects of the divinity. Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb and Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar appear in the Nuṣayrī writings as the oldest mystics to claim that the *ism* was created from the light of the *maʿnā*.[42] The most discussed issue concerning the nature of the divinity is the relations between the *maʿnā* and the *ism*. The first is the passive being that motivates the second, which is its active aspect. The two are compared to "the silent and the speaking" (*al-ṣāmiṭ wa-'l-nāṭiq*) or "the one who speaks and his speech" (*al-nāṭiq wa-'l-nuṭq*). In some cases, the relationship between the first two divine aspects is compared to *al-ḥaraka wa-'l-sukūn* (activity and inactivity).[43] They are also explained, as in Ismāʿīlīsm, as the two letters of the word of creation (k and n from *kun*!, be!), repeated eight times in the Qurʾān in the context of the divine creation.[44] Some sources speak of the emanations as numbers. According to this principle, at the beginning of time, *al-aḥad* (the Single) created *al-wāḥid* (the One).[45] However, it is difficult to understand how a passive essence can create at all.

Al-Jillī dedicated his epistle, the *Fatq wa-ratq*, to the explanation of this process. He claims that it is a result of a permanent pattern of *al-fatq wa-'l-ratq* (dismantling and attaching) of the particles of light, shining from their source.[46] The divine light that flows and connects the aspects of the divinity maintains the delegation (*tafwīḍ*) of some divine abilities.[47] Al-Khaṣībī explains that this transmission of powers is initiated by inspiration (*waḥy*) that is transferred to the *ism* from the

[40] Ibid.
[41] *KS*, fol. 94b–99a. The same principle, that the "gate" is the spiritual peak of the mystic, appears in *US*, fol. 13b–16a.
[42] *HUA*, p. 20; *BS*, p. 18; *DMA*, fol. 132b.
[43] These terms are repeated in several writings of the sect; see, for example, *RFR*, p. 310; *RB*, p. 274.
[44] *RMUF*, p. 17.
[45] Ibid., p. 12.
[46] *RFR*, p. 310.
[47] *RN*, p. 304.

maʿnā.[48] According to the Nuṣayrī tradition, whenever an aspect of the divinity was created, it declared a *shahāda* (testimony) acknowledging that he was emanated from the one and only God and as result was obliged to obey him.[49]

2.1.2 *Addition of the third aspect of divinity*

The creation of the third aspect of the divinity, the *bāb*, is explained in Nuṣayrī theology as the result of God's pity for humanity and of his grace. There was a need to create an inferior aspect of the divinity, since the divinity was too transcendental, and the *maʿnā* appearing as its veil could easily confuse the inferior emanations of light and would be impossible for a human being to grasp. The "gate" is the mediator between the divinity and its creation. It is only through him that the mystic can know God and worship him.[50] This doctrine is linked to the consideration of Ibn Nuṣayr as the last *bāb*.

2.1.3 *The* ism *and the* bāb

The relations between the *ism* and the *bāb* are an important part of the theological discussion of the sect, though still secondary to the issue of the relations between the *maʿnā* and the *ism*. The *bāb* is the outward (*ẓāhir*) aspect of the *ism* and his will (*mashīʾa*).[51] Al-Tabarānī defines these two aspects using Jewish terminology: the *ism* and the *bāb* are *Adūnay Isbaʿūt* (Hebrew, *Adonay Tzevaʾōt*), i.e. God and his armies.[52] Other Nuṣayrī sources use a terminology taken from Christianity and later absorbed into Islamic theology. In these texts the *bāb* is identified with *al-rūḥ al-qudus* (the holy spirit) or *al-rūḥ al-amīn* (the faithful spirit), which is the angel of revelations in the Qurʾān.[53] Just as the *maʿnā* can appear in his *ḥijāb*, the *ism* can appear in his *bāb*. In Chapter 1 it was noted that Ibn Nuṣayr was considered the personification of both the *ism* and the *bāb*. This appearance of an aspect of the divinity in an inferior one is dealt with next.

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[48] *RR*, p. 17; repeated by his disciple al-Jillī, see *RA*, p. 326.

[49] *AAN*, p. 56; *KBS*, p. 232, *RA*, p. 323.

[50] *RB*. P. 275; *AAN*, p. 62.

[51] *RA*, p326; *AAN*, pp. 128–129. Al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī also defines the *ḥijāb* as the *mashīʾa* of the *maʿnā*; see *DMS*, p. 57.

[52] *JK*, p. 38; Ibn Nuṣayr is nicknamed in one place *nūr iṣbāwūt* (light of the Tzevaot); see *MA*, p. 212. For the use of this title in Jewish Kabalah, see L. Jacobs, *A Jewish Theology* (Springfield, N.J.: Behrman House, 1973), p. 149.

[53] *RM*, p. 295; *KHA*, p. 157.

2.1.4 *The appearance of the triad according to the principle of the* siyāqa

The transition of each of the three aspects of the divinity from superior to inferior is explained by al-Khaṣībī in his *Siyāqat al-ẓuhūrāt*. According to the doctrine of the *siyāqa* (transition) the triad appeared in human history in a cyclic order in which the aspects of the divinity changed roles according to a fixed pattern: the *maʿnā* appears in his *ḥijāb*/*ism* and the latter appears in the *bāb*. The transition never occurs in the opposite direction, based on the logic that a holy being cannot appear in the form of a more exalted entity. In other words, an inferior emanation could never appear in a superior one. Thus, for example, the *bāb* could never appear in the *ism* or the *maʿnā* but only in inferior emanations. The *ism* can appear in the *bāb* but cannot appear in the *maʿnā*.[54] Al-Khaṣībī defines two kinds of appearances of the triad: *ẓuhūr ifrāj* (appearance of release or remoteness)—the appearance of *maʿnā* in the *ḥijāb*, in which the essence of God is veiled by taking the form of the *ism*, without merging with it, since God always remains the most abstract being and is extremely remote from his creations and superior to it; and *ẓuhūr mizāj* (appearance of amalgamation)—when *ism* takes the form of the *bāb* by amalgamating with him. The *siyāqa* is discussed further in connection with the personification of the deity in human history.[55]

2.1.5 *The mystical meaning of the* Āyat al-nūr

The appearance of the *maʿnā* to his creatures is a very complicated aspect of the Nuṣayrī doctrine. How could the most abstract aspect of divinity come into contact with his creation? This phenomenon is explained by the Kufan mystic Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Sinān (d. 220/835), a contemporary of Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar.[56] In his *Anwār wa-'l-ḥujub* and *Ḥujub wa-'l-anwār*, he explains that the *maʿnā* appears to his creatures by wrapping himself with the *ḥijāb*. This appearance is similar to the soul speaking through the body; thus the part of the divinity that is veiled by the *ḥijāb* is called *al-rūḥ al-lāhūtiyya* (the divine soul).[57] This appearance is defined as *ghilāf fi jawf ghilāf* (an

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[54] *RR*, p. 17; *RMU*, pp. 164–165; *DKH*, fol. 5b.
[55] *WJAS*, p. 44; *MHAD*, pp. 183–184.
[56] Concerning Muḥammad ibn Sinān, see Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten", *Der Islam* 55 (1978), pp. 236–241.
[57] *HUA*, p. 47.

envelope inside an envelope)[58] and is explained in most of the Nuṣayrī writings by the Qurʾānic *Āyat al-nūr* (verse of light)[59] describing the divinity as light inside lights:

> Allāh is the light of the heavens and earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein a lamp is. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. [This lamp is] kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth [of itself] though no fire touched it. Light upon light, Allāh guides unto his light whom he will. And Allāh speaks to mankind in allegories, for Allāh is knower of all things.
>
> Qurʾān, al-Nūr (24): 35.

This verse is essential for the understanding of the appearance of God in Nuṣayrī doctrine. In his *Risāla al-Mufaḍḍaliyya*, Mufaḍḍal transmits the words of the Imām Jaʿfar, giving an allegorical interpretation to this verse. He explains that the niche is the abstract form of the appearance (*al-ṣūra al-marʾiyya al-anzaʿiyya*) of God and the lamp within his eternal light. This light is formed of three layers: The *nūr*, the enlighted essence of God is veiled by the *ḍayāʾ*, the light that shines from it. These two layers are veiled by the *ẓill*, the shade. The three layers never change from eternity to infinity and are considered the essence of the *maʿnā*. The outward aspect of this divinity is a form of appearance that does change its nature when the *maʿnā* appears in different forms, yet even this outward aspect is neither human nor material.[60]

This interpretation, from the *Mufaḍḍaliyya* epistle, was embraced by the Nuṣayrīs and is repeated whenever the description of the divinity is discussed.[61] This allegorical interpretation for the Verse of Light leads to the inevitable conclusion that the abstract God would appear to his inferior emanations of light and to his human creatures merely as an illusion.

2.2 *The doctrine of Docetism*

The Nuṣayrī cosmos consists of the ideal, illuminated heaven and the material world, which is the symbol of evil. The divine and the material,

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[58] *HAD*, p. 29; *MN*, fol. 84b.
[59] See, for example, in *DKH*, fol. 19b, 45b, 69b.
[60] *RMUF*, pp. 15–16.
[61] See, for example, *KHA*, p. 170; *RMHM*, pp. 181, 185; *HAD*, p. 29.

the pure and impure, never mix. Thus, the Nuṣayrīs, as opposed to most of the Ghulāt sects, reject the doctrine of *ḥulūl* (incarnation), the presence of the Creator in a human body, and consider it an extremely heretical belief.[62] According to a Nuṣayrī source from the nineteenth century, the members of the sect are asked to curse anyone who believes that ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ever ate, drank, had children or was married.[63] This indicates that the belief in incarnation remained through the history of the sect a prohibited heresy. Mufaḍḍal, in his epistle, transmits the explanation of the Imām al-Bāqir to his disciple Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Juʿfī (d. 128/745)[64] concerning *al-ṣūra al-marʾiyya al-anzaʿiyya* (the abstract form of appearance). According to him, it is not the total divinity, which cannot be seen by human eyes. However, this form is not something other than God, because all his aspects and forms are one: "It [the form] is not the entirety of the Creator and the Creator is no other than it". In another place he writes: "it is not him but He is not other than it" (*lā hiya huwa wa-lā huwa ghayruhā*).[65] More simply, since the divinity remains abstract, it creates a human form which reperesents it and is not separated from it. But how can a normal human being grasp this form? According to the logic of the Nuṣayrī doctrine, the only divine appearance that could be understood by a human being is that of a human form.[66]

In Nuṣayrī doctrine the divinity appeared in a human form but not as a human being. Thus, the alternative to the incarnation was the concept of Docetism (from the Greek *dokein*, to appear, seem), which was an important component in Gnostic churches in the East in the first two centuries and was considered heretical in the orthodox churches.[67]

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[62] *RZB*, p. 17; *MHIS*, p. 188, *DKH*, fol. 6a; DMS, p. 56. See also Bar-Asher and Kofsky's explanation concerning al-Nashshābī's rejection of "heretical Nuṣayrīs" who believe in incarnation: *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī religion*, pp. 15–28.

[63] *BS*, p. 45.

[64] Jābir ibn Yazīd, disciple of the fifth Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir and the sixth Imām Jaʿfar al-Sādiq, is an important transmitter of both esoteric and exoteric traditions. See E. Kohlberg, *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism* (Aldershot, Hants.: Variorum/Brookfield, Vt.: Gower Pub. Co., 1991), chap. 8, p. 144, n. 13; Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 74–76.

[65] *RMUF*, p. 11. The difficult term *al-ṣūra al-marʾiyya* is translated by Bar-Asher and Kofsky as "the divine manifested form"; see *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī religion*, p. 19. Paul Nwyia suggested it be translated as "l'image visible"; see "Makzūn al-Sinjārī, poète mystique alaouite", p. 101.

[66] *HAIH*, p. 246. This doctrine is stressed in al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī's poetry; see Nwyia, "Makzūn al-Sinjārī, poète mystique alaouite", pp. 101–102, 104.

[67] R. Braun, "Docetism", in J. Y. Lacoste (ed), *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* (New York/London: Routledge, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 444–445.

The concept of an illusion is a well-known element in Arab culture: for example, the Fata Morgana (*sarāb*), caused by the heat of the desert (Qurʾān, al-Nūr [39]:24). The Nuṣayrīs were not the first to adopt the doctrine of Docetism. The idea was used in the Qurʾān in order to deny the crucifixion of Jesus:

> And they [the Jews] say: We killed Jesus [*al-Masīḥ ʿĪsā ibn Maryam*] the messenger of God. Nevertheless, they did not kill him or crucify him, but so it appeared to them and those who were confused about him [about whether he was really dead] had doubt [*shakk*] about him [i.e. did not believe in his holiness]. They do not have knowledge [*ʿilm*] concerning him [his true nature] but they follow their imagination and he was surely not crucified. Moreover, God raised Jesus to him.
>
> Qurʾān, al-Nisāʾ (2): 157–158.

This verse, cited by Nuṣayrī theologians,[68] contains the important terms *shakk* and *ʿilm*, which are discussed later. The Qurʾānic Docetism of Jesus is the foundation of this doctrine in Nuṣayrī theology. Since analogies between Jesus and ʿAlī and between Jesus and al-Ḥusayn were common among Shīʿī sects,[69] Docetism was associated with both of them and extended by the Nuṣayrīs to all the twelve Imāms. According to the Nuṣayrī belief, all the Imāms were personifications of the deity. Docetism is a concept of illusion used as a means of veiling sacred or divine beings. Thus, Jesus was not crucified and the Shīʿī Imāms were not murdered in reality, but only seemed to have been in the eyes of observers. The mystics (*ʿārifūn*, sing. *ʿārif*) could observe the *ṣūra*, the spiritual form, while the mass of non-believers could only see the *mithāl*, the material form, which appeared in history as an illusion.

In Nuṣayrī tradition, the human form "bestowed its outward image" (*alqā shibhahū*)[70] on one of the martyr's enemies, who replaced him and was killed instead of him. Thus, it was not Jesus who was crucified, but Judas who took his place.[71] The case of Ḥusayn is more complicated. He was not killed in Karbalāʾ, but was replaced by his follower Ḥanẓala al-Shibāmī. Nevertheless, since Ḥanẓala did not deserve to be killed, he was "ransomed" and replaced by ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the enemy of the Shīʿīs.[72] This doctrine of illusion, or Docetism

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[68] See Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī religion*, pp. 22, 191.

[69] Ibid., p. 130, note 94 and the bibliography suggested there.

[70] The translation for this phrase is taken from Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī religion*, p. 129.

[71] *RM*, p. 295.

[72] *MA*, pp. 9–10; *FRR*, pp. 85–87; *DKH*, fol. 29a. Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī religion*, p. 129. The discussion is completed in ibid., p. 130, concerning the

in Gnostic terminology, is applied to other cases in the Jewish and Muslim traditions, such as the murder of Abel by Cain, the sacrifice of Ishmael and the transformation of the stick of Moses into snakes. Even the marriages of the caliphs ʿUthmān and ʿUmar to Ruqayya and Umm Kulthūm, the daughters of the Prophet Muḥammad, were illusions, when in reality they were replaced by the caliphs' daughters.[73] Docetism is also applied to Shīʿī martyrs. According to this doctrine, it was one of the enemies of the Shīʿa who died instead of the saint. In his *Bāṭin al-ṣalāt*, al-Jillī gives some examples: Rashīd al-Hijrī was not executed by Caliph Muʿāwiya for supporting ʿAlī, he was replaced by ʿUbaydallāh ibn Ziyād, the Umayyad ruler of Iraq who was killed in reality. Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb was not executed, but was replaced by ʿĪsā ibn Mūsā, the ʿAbbāsid governor of Kufa.[74]

2.2.1 *Possible sources of inspiration*

Although Docetism derives from Gnosticism, and even has roots in orthodox Islam, this doctrine was never explicitly presented in Shīʿī writings prior to the time of al-Khaṣībī. It was only in his *Risāla al-rāstbāshiyya* that this doctrine was crystallized; it was later developed by his successors, al-Jillī and al-Ṭabarānī, and used on the day of *ʿāshūrāʾ*. There is no development of the doctrine of Docetism in Muslim theology beyond the Qurʾānic Docetism of Jesus, and the doctrine was rejected by the Christian church. Since the Christian Gnostics disappeared after the second century, possible sources of inspiration for the Nuṣayrī sect perhaps lie in other Gnostic groups that survived to the time of al-Khaṣībī.

The doctrine of Docetism was preserved only in Persian Manichaeism, which was created in the third century and combined Zoroastrian beliefs with Gnostic Christianity. According to Halm, Gnostic sects were persecuted by the Byzantines in Syria and Egypt and escaped

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connection between Ishmael and Ḥusayn. As al-Khaṣībī explains, according to the *ʿāmma* (the masses, i.e. the Sunnīs), Ishmael was ransomed by a sheep and according to the Imāmiyya and the Mufawwaḍiyya, he was ransomed by Ḥusayn. But according to the doctrine of Docetism, Ḥusayn was not killed; thus al-Khaṣībī claims that Ishmael was ransomed by ʿUmar. Concerning the Mufawwiḍa, a Shīʿī sect believing in the delegation of powers from God to the Imāms, see Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, pp. 21–29, 38–49.

[73] *KBS*, pp. 257–258; *DKH*, fol. 10b, 11a, 28b, 31a, 38a; *MN*, fol. 114b–115a; *ARM*, fol. 1–2, 21–22.

[74] *KBS*, p. 257.

to the east where they were tolerated. They enjoyed freedom under Muslim rule and the members of the sect were scattered among the villages of Iraq. Nevertheless, the Manichaeans began to suffer persecution under the ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Mahdī (d. 169/785) and most of them migrated to Persia and Central Asia.[75]

Another origin could have been a different Gnostic group, closely related to the Manichaeans and founded approximately at the same time, the Mandaeans. They were more tolerated under Islam because their religion was considered monotheistic. The Mandaeans were held to be *ahl al-kitāb* (people of the book), as were Jews and Christians, and as *ahl al-dhimma*, their religion was protected. They were scattered in Iraq and in north Syria, where the Muslims called them al-Ṣābiʾūn or al-Ṣābiʾa (the Sabeans). Al-Khaṣībī migrated to Ḥarrān, which makes the Sabean sect in that city a possible source. However, since reliable information is lacking concerning the Sabean doctrines and the sect's true identity, it is not possible either to reject or accept Dussaud's interesting hypothesis concerning the connection between them and the Nuṣayrī sect.[76] The only concrete information concerning the Sabeans in Nuṣayrī sources is a rare description of their pagan ritual in ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba's *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif*. The Nuṣayrī Ḥarrānian leader accuses the *Ṣābiʾa* of worshipping the stars and offering sacrifices to them, in the belief that the smoke of burning animals reached them.[77] Al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī mentions them few times in his *Dīwān*, only stressing their inferiority, along with the Jews and the Christians, to the *muwaḥḥidūn*.[78]

2.3 *The five* aytām

The five *aytām* (sing. *yatīm*, unique, orphan) are five emanations of the triad, named because of their special role as sub-creators of the world.[79] It seems that the real reason for this nickname was forgotten by the founder of the sect. No explanation for this name is found in Ghulāt texts or in the writings of the first founders of the Nuṣayriyya. Al-Jillī,

[75] Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 5–8; J. L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 86.
[76] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 20, 44, 82–88. Concerning the problematic identity of the Sabeans, see T. Fahd, "Ṣābiʾa", *EI*^{2}, VIII (1993), pp. 675–678.
[77] *HAIH*, p. 259.
[78] *DMS*, pp. 93, 113, 252.
[79] *DKH*, fol. 6a; *BS*, p. 20.

who was asked to explain the meaning of the word *yatīm* in his *Risālat al-bayān*, bases his explanation on an incorrect root. He explains that the term *aytām* expresses the order of the emanations: "They followed the *bāb* and with them ended the creatures of the rank that were [created] after them" (*iʾtammū bi-ʾl-bāb wa-atamma bihim man kāna baʿdahum min ahl al-marātib*).[80] Thus, he gives the roots a.m.m. for *iʾtammū* (to follow) and t.m.m. for *atamma* (to end), while the correct root is y.t.m. (to be unique or an orphan). The Qurʾān expresses great sympathy towards orphans in general, since Muḥammad himself was an orphan adopted by his uncle Abū Ṭālib, the father of ʿAlī. However, the use of the word *aytām* in the Qurʾān does not help in understanding its meaning in the Nuṣayrī doctrine.

According to one of Ibn Nuṣayr's teachers, ʿAbdallāh ibn Ghālib al-Kābulī, the five *aytām* were created by the *ism* from the "essence of his essence, which is the *bāb*" (*dhāt dhātihī wa-huwa al-bāb*).[81] This explanation seems to be a later addition by the editor, while the original text does not seem to include the *bāb* at all. Even without omitting it, this text shows a marginalization of the role of the *bāb*, which supports the hypothesis that the divinity of the Ghulāt contained only two elements and the third aspect of the divinity was added later on by the Nuṣayrīs.

The doctrine of the five creators of the world is known from the Mukhammisa (Pentadist) sect in Shīʿism, which deified the *ahl al-kisāʾ* (people of the mantle), the close family of the Prophet Muḥammad, whom he covered with his coat as a symbol of sanctifiction. According to Shīʿī tradition they were Muḥammad, his cousin ʿAlī, his daughter Fāṭima and his two grandsons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. This sect from the eighth century the Mukhammisa was a group of Ghulāt from Kufa with close ties to the Khaṭṭābiyya of Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb. Some of the doctrines of their book, the *Umm al-kitāb*, were the basis of Nuṣayrī beliefs.[82] In the introduction to his *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn*, al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba, when speaking about his personal library, makes an explicit statement concerning the Pentadists:

> I read all my accumulated material, which was familiar to me from [my knowledge of] the mystical science of *tawḥīd* [monotheism, the Nuṣayrī

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[80] *RB*, p. 277; *RA*, p. 327.
[81] *AAN*, p. 72.
[82] Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 81–138; F. Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 93–95.

> doctrine]: some 150 books of the mystical *tawḥīd*, 250 books of the *takhmīs* [doctrine of the Mukhammisa], of the *tafwīḍ* [doctrine of delegation] and of *taqṣīr* [deficient Shīʿa] and science of the *ẓāhir* [exoteric] but which proves the *bāṭin* [esoteric]…[83]

Later in the introduction, he notes:

> I did not mention in it [in my book] the proofs and claims used to defend the sinners, apart from few [of them] belonging to the Mukhammisa, because of their adjacency to the *tawḥīd*.[84]

Since the term *aytām* is not found in pre-Nuṣayrī documents, it is likely, as in the case of the third aspect of the divinity, that they were added to the divinity by the Nuṣayrīs for historical and theological-polemical reasons. It seems that the goal of the subordination of the *aytām* to the *bāb* was to undermine the main doctrine of the Mukhammisa without completely abolishing it. In order to subordinate the pentad to the triad, the *ahl al-kisāʾ* were given other important roles in the divine world and the members of the pentad were replaced by less important figures, the five most loyal followers of ʿAlī. Although Dussaud did not accept the idea that the *ahl al-kisāʾ* are the *aytām*, Lyde did find clear indications for this analogy, in his "Manual for Shaykhs".[85] Lyde also gives a very interesting explanation for the translation of the *aytām* as "orphans", i.e. "those disciples who have lost their master".[86] Indeed, several of the historical *bāb*s were persecuted and died as martyrs, leaving their disciples "orphans". Ibn Jundab became an "orphan" after his master Ibn Nuṣayr had died from his illness. The term *aytām* and its significance demands further study.

As al-Jillī explains in his *Bāṭin al-ṣalāt*, the pentad is the mystical meaning of the five prayers in Islam. They are also the mystical meaning of the five fingers on each hand, a symbol used in the Jewish mystical work *Sefer yetzira*.[87] Other elements are found in Nuṣayrī doctrine that are similar to those in the *Sefer yetzira*. Jewish mysticism may have infiltrated the Nuṣayrī religion through earlier contacts between

[83] *HAD*, p. 12.
[84] Ibid., p. 14.
[85] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, p. 68; Lyde, *Asian Mystery*, pp. 134–135.
[86] Lyde, ibid., p. 133.
[87] *KBS*, pp. 225–225; 262. In Sefer Yetzira, concerning the Sefirot (enumerations, ten divine ranks), "Ten fingers, five opposite five", see A. P. Hayman, *Sefer Yaṣira, Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), pp. 53, 67.

the Ghulāt and Jewish mystics in Iraq. Indeed, a few Hebrew terms are present in the sect's writing. It is surprising to find the explanation concerning the numerical significance of the angel Jibrāʿīl[88] as a numerical symbol for the pentad, since in Arabic this name contains seven letters. It is the Hebrew *Gavriʾel* that contains five letters: g.v.r.ʾ.l. The names of the most important personifications of the *maʿnā*, the head of the triad, and of the *bāb*, the creator of the pentad, have numerical significance as well. The name ʿAlī is formed from three letters and Salmān from five.[89]

2.4 *The personification of the deity*

The Nuṣayrī writings mention lists of the appearances of the triad and the pentad in human history. As explained earlier, their appearance is Docetic, without incarnation. The *maʿnā*, the *ism* and the *bāb* appeared to mankind in the form of kings, prophets and well-known figures from the Jewish Bible, the Christian world, Iranian and Greek cultures, and concluding with the Muslim world. These multi-cultural appearances signify simply that all such divine revelations have the same message, and all the appearances are of the one and only God. The fact that the divinity appeared in multiple aspects and forms does not contradict the principle of *tawḥīd*. The first poem of *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī*, the *Bāb al-hidāya* (gate of guidance) expresses this belief:

> The gate of guidance is one eternal gate/
> To the kingdom, a gathering [of entities] to one eternal *ism*
> And the *ism* is the name of its *maʿnā* and his first [emanation]/
> And the names of the *ism* are many as one would want [to imagine]
> Even if they would number a hundred thousand/
> their source is one which has no end
> And God does not appear in the creatures and does not resemble them/
> But in his own essence he appears as one and only[90]

Every appearance of the deity was intended to call upon a specific society to follow God's message. Since the Nuṣayrīs consider themselves Shīʿī Muslims and their holy book is the Qurʾān, they explain that the most important appearance of the deity is that which occurred at the

[88] *KBS*, p. 225.
[89] Concerning the name Salmān, see ibid. Concerning the name ʿAlī, see *JK*, p. 19; *FRR*, p. 132; *US*, fol. 5b.
[90] *DKH*, fol. 5a.

dawn of Islam, when the essence of the divinity was personified in ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Hence, his family and followers are all considered different aspects of the divinity:

maʿnā	*ism/ḥijāb*	*bāb*
ʿAlī ibn Abī Tālib	Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh	Salmān al-Fārisī

It is very common in modern research to identify this triad as *ʿayn-mīm-sīn*, using the initials of the three personifications of the triad.[91] Nevertheless, it should be noted that this formula is rarely found in medieval sources. In fact, it appears only in one source, al-Tabarānī's *Kitāb al-ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā*, written in the eleventh century, after the death of his master al-Jillī.[92] The next time we find this formula is in Nuṣayrī sources from the nineteenth-century the Nuṣayrī Catechism (Kiel 19), the *Bākūra al-Sulaymāniyya* and the *Kitāb taʿlīm al-diyāna al-Nuṣayriyya*.[93]

The three persons are well-known figures from the beginning of Muslim history. ʿAlī, the younger cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad, is held by the Shīʿa to be the person most suitable to inherit his spiritual and political leadership after his unexpected death. This view was rejected by the majority of the Muslims led by other members of the Quraysh (the tribe of the Prophet). This majority was later called *sunna* (repetition, i.e. those who repeat the acts of Muḥammad). The tension between the Shīʿīs and the Sunnīs and the growing adoration of the cousin of the Prophet, even led some Shīʿī sects, among them the Nuṣayrīs, to consider ʿAlī superior to Muḥammad. Salmān, the first Persian to convert to Islam and one of the most prominent *ṣaḥāba* (Companions of the Prophet), represents the Persian connection with Islam from its birth, which is an important aspect of the Nuṣayrī religion. Salmān and the persons who are personifications of the five *aytām* are the most eager supporters of ʿAlī and the main

[91] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Noṣayrīs*, pp. 65–67; Lyde, *Asian Mystery*, pp. 110–111, 136; Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, pp. 318, 320.

[92] *HIF*, p. 54. The issue of this formula is dealt with in the discussion of the initiation.

[93] *KHC*, fol. 10b; *BS*, p. 14; *TDN*, pp. 217–218 (question 74). In the *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī*, the triple formula appears only four times in unreliable parts of the corpus, which are later additions; see *DKH*, fol. 74a, 81a, 106b, 119b.

advocates of his legitimacy as the leader of the *umma* (Muslim society). The five *aytām* created the two worlds, the world of lights and the material world:

1. *al-yatīm al-akbar* (the greatest *yatīm*): al-Miqdād ibn Aswad al-Kindī	
2. Abū Dharr Jundab ibn Junāda al-Ghifārī	3. ʿAbdallāh ibn Rawāḥa al-Anṣārī
4. ʿUthmān ibn Maẓʿūn al-Najāshī	5. Qanbar ibn Kādān al-Dawsī

Each of these *saḥāba* proved his loyalty to ʿAlī. For example, al-Miqdād refused to give his *bayʿa* (oath of allegiance) to Caliph ʿUmar, and Abū Dharr was mortally punished after criticizing Caliph ʿUthmān for his corruption. Among the Nuṣayrī saints are the Shīʿī *arkān al-arbaʿ* (four pillars): Salmān, Miqdād, Abū Dharr and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, who appears as one personification of the *aytām* in later cycles of time, together with other partisans of ʿAlī and other Shīʿī leaders.[94]

Although the appearances of these eight persons, the triad and the pentad, are seen as the most prominent personifications of the deity, they are not the only ones. The Nuṣayrī tradition mentions additional appearances of all the eight beings in the form of other figures from Shīʿī culture. The triad appeared in the persons of the *saṭr al-imāma* (line of the Imams), the twelve Imāms of the Shīʿa and their *bāb*s, as explained in al-Khaṣībī's *Siyāqat al-ẓuhūrāt*. They appeared each time with their five *aytām*, until the last cycle. Finally, the divinity was occulted with the disappearance of the twelfth Imām, the *mahdī*. The last personification of the deity was dealt with in the biography of Ibn Nuṣayr. This was seen as part of the divinity, the *bāb* and then the *ism*, and five of his most prominent followers were seen as the *aytām*. They were headed by the *yatīm al-akbar* (the greatest orphan), who was the successor of Ibn Nuṣayr, Muḥammad ibn Jundab.[95] The appearance of

[94] *TDN*, pp. 207–209.

[95] In Nuṣayrī literature lists are often found of the personifications of the deity in all the cycles, concluding with that of Ibn Nuṣayr and his followers. For lists of appearances of the triad, see, for example, *JK*, pp. 37–40; *KHA*, p. 229; *RR*; p. 59. For lists of the personifications of the *aytām*, see *RR*, pp. 70–71. For a combined list of personifications of the triad and pentad, see *TDN*, in Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrīs-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 201–209, translated into English pp. 171–180.

heavenly creatures in the material world leads to the explanation of the structure of the cosmos.

3. *The Nuṣayrī cosmos*

The cosmology of the Nuṣayrīs seems to have been already well-established two centuries before the sect's appearance, in the writings of Mufaḍḍal. The main sources for this doctrine are Mufaḍḍal's *Haft wa-'l-aẓilla* as well as Muḥammad ibn Sinān's *Anwār wa-'l-ḥujub* and *al-Ḥujub wa-'l-anwār*. The recently available sources from *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* mention an older book that was lost, *Kitāb al-marātib wa-'l-daraj*, attributed to ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya, which contained detailed explanations of the ranks of the cosmos.[96] This last author was a descendant of ʿAlī's brother Jaʿfar ibn Abī Ṭālib. He is famous for his rebellion against the Umayyads in 127/744, eleven years before the uprising of Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb. From ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya's book several quotations are available in Nuṣayrī writings concerning the *marātib*. A list of the ranks, which is identical to the Nuṣayrī *marātib*, appears in al-Mufaḍḍal's writings, probably copied from ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya.[97] A complete table of the *marātib*, their number and their symbols taken from the terminology of the Qurʾān, was copied from the latter's book, the *Marātib wa-'l-daraj*, by two Nuṣayrī leaders from the Banū Shuʿba. These last sources became available to us recently in the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* (see the tables in Appendix 4).[98]

According to the Nuṣayrī doctrine, the *ahl al-marātib* (creatures of the rank) emanated from the five *aytām*. The term *marātib* (sing. *martaba*) seems to have originated from Neoplatonic thought and was used by the Ismāʿīlīs for the "ranks of propagandists" (*marātib al-daʿwa*, also called the *ḥudūd*).[99] The equivalent term in Hebrew, *maʿalot*, was used by the fifteenth-century Rabbi Ḥōter Ben Shlōmō in his commentary on the thirteen principles of Maimonides, which was influenced by Ismāʿīlī thought.[100]

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[96] *AAN*, pp. 135–183, 202; *RHA*, p. 308.

[97] *RMUF*, p. 18.

[98] *HAD*, pp. 88–89.

[99] F. Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, p. 217.

[100] D. R. Blumenthal (trans.), *The Commentary of R. Ḥōter Ben Shlōmō to the Thirteen Principles of Maimonides* (Leiden: Brill, 1974). On the Ismāʿīlī influence on the Yemeni Jews, see J. Tobi, *The Jews of Yemen: Studies in Their History and Cultures* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 207–208.

The *ahl al-marātib* are divided into two parts. The first is that of the exalted ranks (*al-marātib al-ʿalawiyya*); the five emanations of light are "the immense world of light" (*al-ʿālam al-kabīr al-nūrānī*), each created from another *yatīm*, in the following order:

1		2		3		4		5
al-Miqdād	>	Abū Dharr	>	ʿAbdallāh ibn Rawāḥa	>	ʿUthmān ibn Maẓʿūn	>	Qanbar ibn Kādān
V		V		V		V		V
nuqabāʾ		*nujabāʾ*		*mukhtaṣṣūn*		*mukhliṣūn*		*mumtaḥanūn*[101]
leaders		nobles		authorities		the faithful		the tested

According to another tradition, al-Miqdād alone created all the *ahl al-marātib*.[102] A list of the ranks (without the use of the term *marātib*) appeared in the *Umm al-kitāb* although in a different form, in which Salmān is the highest of the ranks, above Miqdād.[103] Al-Khaṣībī explains that angels consist of a total of 5,000 creatures.[104] The second part of the ranks is that of the seven inferior emanations (*al-marātib al-sufliyya*), which are in "the small material world" (*al-ʿālam al-ṣaghīr al-turābī*):

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
muqarrabūn	>	*karūbiyyūn*	>	*rūḥāniyyūn*	>	*muqaddasūn*	>	*sāʾiḥūn*	>	*mustamiʿūn*	>	*lāḥiqūn*.[105]
V		V		V		V		V		V		V
who are drawn near	>	angels	>	spiritual ones	>	saints	>	travelers	>	listeners	>	followers

Al-Ṭabarānī explains that these seven ranks are alluded to in the seven letters of the names ʿAlī (3) and Muḥammad (4).[106] It is interesting to note that the Nuṣayrīs developed a concept of holy emanations belong-

[101] *RB*, p. 277; *DKH*, fol. 6b, 41a; *KS*, pp. 93a–94a; *SUR*, fol. 229b–131b; *BS*, p. 22. The *nuqabāʾ* and *nujabāʾ* also appear in the Sūfī ranks of angels; see, for example, R. J. A. McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 22.

[102] *RR*, p. 43.

[103] *UK*, fol. 99–100; Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 112–113. The enlightened ranks of *Umm al-kitāb* are seven: Salmān > Miqdād > Abū Dharr > *naqībān* (Persian, pl. of *naqīb*) > *najībān* > *muwaḥḥidān* (to be replaced later by the *mukhtaṣṣūn*; the name *muwaḥḥidūn* is used by the Nuṣayrīs to identify themselveṣ > *mumtaḥanān.*

[104] Ibid., pp. 16–17; *RTN*, p. 300.

[105] This list of the upper and lower ranks is repeated in the same order and with identical names in all the sources of the sect; see, for example, *IM*, pp. 246–247, 277; *RR*, pp. 16–17; *BI*, p. 426; *RHA*, p. 308; *DKH*, fol. 7a, 42b; *KS*, pp. 94a, b; *DMS*, p. 116; *BS*, p. 22.

[106] *JK*, p. 19.

ing to the material world. The persons who belong to these inferior emanations of the deity are mystics and shaykhs of the sect. For example, al-Khaṣībī was considered by his followers as one of the *marātib al-sufliyya*. The sanctification of al-Khaṣībī was one of the main issues of Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba's *Risālat ikhtilāf al-ʿālamayn*. According to this book, al-Khaṣībī was a charismatic leader and obtained illumination, but still had a human nature (for example the need to breathe, eat and drink). Hence he was considered to be more than a regular human being but less than a divine creature. Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba quotes al-Jillī who states that his master belonged to the rank of the *karūbiyyūn*, based on one of al-Khaṣībī's poems.[107]

The role of the *ahl al-marātib* in the Nuṣayrī doctrine is to serve as a spiritual ladder, in which the inferior level enables the mystic to reach the divine source of creation, a long and difficult process that is discussed separately. According to the *Umm al-kitāb* the *ahl al-marātib* participated in the creation of the material world, together with Miqdād and Abū Dharr, headed by Salmān.[108] In the *Umm al-kitāb*, the order to create the world was transmitted to Salmān directly from the "most exalted", i.e. ʿAlī[109] and in Nuṣayrī tradition it was transmitted to him with the mediation of the *ism*, Muḥammad.[110] According to the *Marātib wa-'l-daraj*, the number of *ahl al-marātib* in the "lower ranks" is 119,000, which makes a total of 124,000 creatures together with the "higher ranks" emanated from the *aytām*.[111] This number has significance in Muslim mysticism. According to Muslim tradition, a total of 124,000 prophets were sent by God, and according to a Ṣūfī tradition, God ordered Noah to prepare 124,000 boards to build the ark; on each board God wrote the name of one of his prophets, beginning with Adam and ending with Muḥammad.[112]

We can sum up the structure of emanations from the divinity in the following sketch:

[107] *RIA*, p. 294. In the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, al-Khaṣībī is called *al-ʿārif maʿrifat Allāh* (the mystic possessing the divine gnosis). See *BS*, p. 9.
[108] *UK*, fol. 87–92; Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī 'l-Islām*, pp. 111–113.
[109] Ibid., fol. 64–66.
[110] *RA*, p. 326.
[111] *RB*, p. 281; *RIA*, p. 290; Lyde, *The Asian Mystery*, p. 135.
[112] I. Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. A. Hamori and R. Hamori (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 193, n. 77.

Emanations	Personifications
maʿnā	ʿAlī
V	V
ism/ ḥijāb	Muḥammad
V	V
bāb	Salmān
V	V
5 aytām	Al-Miqdād > Abū Dharr > ʿAbdallāh ibn Rawāḥa > ʿUthmān ibn Maẓʿūn > Qanbar ibn Kādān
V	V
ahl al-marātib:	
al-ʿālam al-kabīr al-nūrānī:	
nuqabāʾ	prophets from the Jewish,
V	Christian and Muslim religions,
nujabāʾ	personalities from
V	Persian and Greek cultures
mukhtaṣṣūn	and the 12 Imāms
V	of the Shīʿa
mukhliṣūn	
V	
mumtaḥanūn	
V	V
al-ʿālam al-ṣaghīr al-turābī:	
muqarrabūn	shaykhs and charismatic
V	leaders of the sect
karūbiyyūn	who were sanctified
V	
rūḥāniyyūn	
V	
muqaddasūn	
V	
sāʾiḥūn	
V	
mustamiʿūn	
V	
lāḥiqūn	
V	

The *muwaḥḥidūn*, members of the Nuṣayrī sect, seeking for salvation through gnosis.

The subject of the *marātib* leads to the doctrine of the creation of the world in the Nuṣayrī tradition. The "creatures of the rank", apart from those belonging to the material world, took part in the creation but they themselves were also created as part of the process of emanation.

3.1 *The creation of the world and the tradition of the letters*

The process that led to the creation of the divine emanations and the dual cosmos of the spiritual and the material worlds should be explained. The doctrine of the creation of the world by God appears in several forms in pre-Nuṣayrī and Nuṣayrī texts. Nevertheless, these sources indicate that three main traditions associated with the creation are repeated more or less with the same variations. The three traditions do not contradict each other, but they can be merged together into a story of creation with three chapters: God produced letters to create the world; he tested his creatures knowing that they would fail; then this ideal world deteriorated as result of their sins and became a hierarchical cosmos of ranks divided between the ideal world of light and the evil material world, the *dunya*.

Acccording to Nuṣayrī tradition, at the beginning of time God created the One (*al-wāhid*), which is the *ism*, and he created the 28 letters of the Arabic language, of which 22 belong to the Hebrew and Syriac languages. They were created by his will (*mashīʾa*) presented by the two letters k. and n. of the Arabic word *kun*! (be !). The first letter was the *yāʾ* and the last was the *alīf*. After their creation they all bowed toward God except the *alif*. Since he was right not to bow without the order from God to do so, he became the first and the most respected of the letters. The *yāʾ* represents Salmān and the *alif* Miqdād. The first five letters of the alphabet are the *aytām*, the next twelve are the *nuqabāʾ* and the last eleven are the stars that Joseph saw in his dream (the well-known biblical story repeated in the Qurʾān, Yūsuf [12]: 4). The letters were the divine tools for the creation of the world.[113]

This tradition can be traced back to Mufaḍḍal's writing, but does not seem to have originated from Muslim mysticism. Muslim mystics used to attribute enigmatic powers to the *fawātiḥ*, the fourteen "mysterious letters" that appear at the beginning of 29 chapters of the Qurʾān, whose true meaning is unknown.[114] It is rather in Jewish mysticism that a tradition is found about God using the alphabet (*aleph-beth*) to create the world. In the *Sefer yetzira* the Creator is called "the single" (*ha-eḥad*, compare with the Nuṣayrī *al-aḥad*) and he created the letters

[113] *RMUF*, pp. 17–18; *MS*, p. 25; *IM*, p. 256; *RR*, pp. 43–45; *JK*, p. 21.

[114] A. T. Welch, "al-Ḳurʾān", *EI*², v, pp. 412–414; R. Bell and M. Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qurʾan* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), pp. 61–62.

of the Hebrew alphabet. He crowned the *aleph*, then the *mem* and then the *shīn*.[115] Paul Kraus and later Paul Fenton both pointed out the interesting similarity between these three "crowned" letters *aleph-mem-shīn* (which represent the triad of soil-water-fire) of *Sefer yetzira* and the Nuṣayrī initials *ʿayn-mīm-sīn*.[116] Both triads are defined as "secret": *aleph-mem-shīn sod gadol* (great secret) in *Sefer yetzira* and *sirr* (secret of) *ʿayn-mīm-sīn* in *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*.[117]

While the Nuṣayrī triad reflects God and two of his emanations, the triad of the *Yetzira* is subordinated to God and the *aleph* is created by him. Nevertheless, among the Nuṣayrīs there was also a deviant group in the eleventh century called the Ḥātimiyya, who subordinated the triad to God. They claimed that the triad was created by a more abstract God, the *ghayb* (absence).[118] However, the language of the *Yetzira* is too vague to compare with the explicit definition of the Nuṣayrī triad. The use of the formula *ʿayn-mīm-sīn* is rarely found in medieval sources. Yet in the light of the number of similarities between the *Sefer yetzira* and Nuṣayrī theology, this subject demands further study.

3.2 *The process of creation and the tradition of the fall*

The tradition of the creating letters is followed, according to the logic of chronology, by another tradition of creation of light and shade. This tradition, which appears or is referred to in almost every source of the Nuṣayrī sect, seems to have been inspired by Persian Zoroastrianism and Gnostic Christianity, rather than by Jewish mysticism. It is based on the Neoplatonic concept of light of creation on one hand, and on the Persian dualism of light and darkness on the other. The sources for this second tradition of creation are Mufaḍḍal's *Haft wa-'l-aẓilla* and his *Mufaḍḍaliyya* as well as Muḥammad ibn Sinān's *Anwār wa-'l-ḥujub* and *al-Ḥujub wa-'l-anwār*. Thanks to the recently available *Ḥujjat al-ʿĀrif* by Ḥamza ibn Shuʿba, we know that Mufaḍḍal's

[115] Heyman, *Sefer Yeṣira*, pp. 49–50, the earlier recoverable text, lines 9, 32–34.
[116] This comparison was made by Professor Paul Fenton during my doctoral thesis defence, Sorbonne Paris IV, 27 February 2006. See also P. Kraus, *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān: Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam* (Cairo 1942), vol. 2, p. 267.
[117] Heyman, *Sefer Yeṣira*, p. 50, line 24. Compare with *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, sūrat al-nisba (4) line 3; sūrat al-ʿayn al-ʿAlawiyya (9), lines 1–3; see in *BS*, pp. 14, 25.
[118] Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 16–17; *MN*, fol. 134a.

source was Yūnus ibn Ẓabyān's lost book, the *Kitāb al-ibtidāʾ* (book of creation/beginning).[119]

The *Umm al-kitāb* is also relevant to this subject, since it represents an older, less developed version of this tradition, which contributes to a better understanding of its contents. According to the *Umm al-kitāb*, the creation of the cosmos was the result of a series of sins commited by the creatures. The more severe were the sins, the more distant the creatures became from the pure divinity. Creatures who expressed their regret ceased their deterioration. Thus, the different levels of sins and regrets created the ranks, the *marātib*.[120] This process was the result of the challenge of God to his creatures in order to test their loyalty to him.

According to the *Umm al-kitāb*, in the beginning of time there was a pure world of light. God was praised by his enlightened creations. Then, in order to test them, he changed his form of appearance and created confusion among them. As a result, two major sins were committed which caused their gradual deterioration (or fall). The first sin was doubt (*shakk*), a lack of belief in God's presence, caused by his strange appearance. The second was the sin of pride, caused by the fact that the first emanated creatures of light compared their inferior nature to that of the divinity. After every sin God took light from the sinning creatures, and the more they sinned the darker and more inferior they became. From the contents of this tradition, we may assume that its goal was to prevent the belief in dualism. When the first emanation of God, called ʿAzāzīl in the *Umm al-kitāb*, claimed that he was God because he possessed the power of creation, God answered him that "it is impossible that there will be two Gods".[121] This anti-dualistic tendency appears in this source together with explicit Zoroastrian elements, such as the presence of Ahrimān,[122] another name for ʿAzāzīl, a kind of demiurge who incites the creatures against God.[123] This

119 *HAIH*, p. 269.

120 *UK*, fol. 98–107; Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 110–112; *RHA*, p. 308.

121 *UK*, fol. 63; Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 114–120.

122 According to Zoroastrian dualism, two gods exist: Ormazd and Ahrimān, who represent good and evil. According to the Avesta, their permanent struggle will end with the defeat of Ahriman. See F. M. Muller, *The Zend Avest*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2001), p. xliii.

123 *UK*, fol. 115; see the explanation concerning the evil angel ʿAzāzīl in Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 136–137; for his appearance in al-Ḥallāj's poetry, see M. S. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), pp. 278–280.

struggle between ʿAlī and Ahrimān reflects the polemic of Islam against Zoroastrianism, of monotheism against dualism. Also, in the *Haft wa-'l-aẓilla*, Mufaḍḍal challenges dualism, claiming that light existed before darkness and good before evil.[124]

The process of the creation in the *Haft wa-'l-aẓilla* contains similar elements to the *Umm al-kitāb*. God created by his will (*mashīʾa*) the seven shades (*aẓilla*, sing. *ẓill*) and taught them how to worship him by imitating him: he praised himself and they followed him by praising God.[125] The creation of shades in a world of light enabled these creatures to wear a certain form of existence. Since they possessed a great amount of the light of creation, their praise of God created the seven heavens.[126] Their praise also created more inferior creatures, which are the "ghosts" (*ashbāḥ*, sing. *shabaḥ*). From these creatures there emanated even more inferior creatures: the "spirits" (*arwāḥ*, sing. *rūḥ*) and then the bodies (*abdān*, sing. *badan*), which are the material creatures.[127] From the praise of himself, God created the *ḥijāb*, which veils him from his inferior creatures. The *ashbāḥ* serve as veils (*ḥujub*) for the "creatures of light" when they appear to humanity.[128] Then God created seven Adams (*sabʿa* [in Persian *haft*] *Ādamiyyūn*), one for each of the seven heavens, and he made a pact (*mīthāq*) for them and their descendants, according to which they acknowledged his superiority and declared a *shahāda*, that he is the one and only God.[129] According to the *Anwār wa-'l-ḥujub*, God asked his creatures: "Am I not your Lord?" (*a-lastu bi-rabbikum*? Qurʾān, al-Aʿrāf [7]: 172), and they answered: "Yes you are".[130] Since all the heavenly creatures wore a form of light, God veiled himself with light when he appeared to them, since "one cannot grasp a thing which is not from his form or from his nature".[131]

After creating the first seven Adams and educating them, God created time. At first, he created seven days, each day corresponding to

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124 *HA*, p. 29.

125 Ibid., p. 30. According to al-Khaṣībī, the *mashīʾa* and the *aẓilla* were God's first creations; see *HK*, p. 437.

126 *HA*, p.

127 *HA*, pp. 29–30.

128 *HA*, p. 31.

129 *HA*, p. 31; *AUH*, p. 66.

130 *AUH*, p. 73.

131 Ibid.

one of the heavens.[132] Then He created the twelve cycles of time, the *adwār* (sing. *dawr*), each one of 50,000 years. In the first five cycles the creatures of light appear in this world wearing a material form. These cycles were followed by another six cycles in which only material forms existed as a result of the growing power of evil in the world. Finally, He created the "cycle of the end of the world" (*dawr muntahā ʾl-dunyā*).[133] God enabled his creatures of light to reach the material world in order to test its dwellers. From the sins of the creatures of light he created their enemies. Their first sin was a combination of arrogance and disobedience to God. Trying to escape from their trial, the creatures of light said they preferred not to descend to the material world as God had demanded, but rather wanted to worship God only in the world of light. As a result God ceased to appear to them in his own essence, and created from their sin the *ḥijāb* in which he veiled himself every time he contacted them. The creatures of light were cursed by losing forever the closeness they possessed to their creator. As an expression of their sorrow, they surrounded the *ḥijāb* for 7,000 years.[134] According to a tradition based on Muḥammad ibn Sinān's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, the total period in which there was only a world of light lasted 7,077 years and seven hours.[135] No source was found for this strange period of time, which emphasizes the enigmatic significance of the number seven. The only possible connection can be drawn from a Muslim tradition about Job, according to which, when he was 70 years old he was stricken by the devil (Iblīṣ and the duration of his calamities was seven years, seven months and seven hours. This tradition, mentioned by the commentary of Bayḍāwī (d. 681/1282) on the Qurʾān, is based on a similar tradition that appears in the much older Jewish *Berēshīt Rabba*.[136] Since the purpose of God in both cases, that of the *ahl al-marātib* and that of Job, was to test the loyalty of his creatures, the connection between the two traditions may not be a coincidence.

The sin of the creatures was followed by more sins, which created the devil, Iblīs (from the Greek Diabolos) and his army of demons (*shayāṭīn* sing. *shayṭān*, as the Hebrew *satan*). Since Iblīs was created

[132] *HA*, p. 33.
[133] *HA*, pp. 34–35.
[134] *HA*, pp. 35–36; *AUH*, p. 77.
[135] *HAD*, p. 22; Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Noṣayrīs*, pp. 70–71.
[136] M. Th. Houtsma, "Ayyūb", *EI*, I (1913–1936), p. 220.

at a later stage of the creation, he did not know the source of creation and did not receive the divine education that had been granted to the creatures of light. As a result, he did not acknowledge the supremacy of God and was totally evil. The Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq explained that from the time Iblīs was created, evil was always connected with ignorance (*jahl*).[137]

The enmity of Iblīs towards the believers stemmed from his scorn of them. He thought that they were only material bodies and that he was more powerful than them. The Prophet Muḥammad was sent to remind the believers that they were once lights. Since this knowledge gives the believers much power, they are ordered to keep it secret. Since then, the *muwaḥḥidūn* are obliged to maintain caution (*taqiyya*) and concealment (*kitmān*), important terms that are discussed later.[138] According to the Qurʾān Iblīs said:

> I am better than him [the human Adam], you [God] have created me from fire and him from soil.
>
> (Qurʾān, al-Aʿrāf [7]: 12).

Whilst fire is considered stronger than soil, the only material that can resist fire is water. Thus, the Nuṣayrīs attribute mystical powers to water, which is for them a divine symbol of God's representatives in the material world, beginning with Adam who is stronger than Iblīs. Since God gave the devils human appearance, there is no perceptible difference between them and the believers.[139] The element of water in Nuṣayrī theology is discussed later.

Although the fall of the creatures from the ideal "world of light" is gradual in the *Haft wa-'l-Aẓilla*, the *Umm al-kitāb* divides this fall into a gradual fall of the creatures of light, which creates the world of lights, and an abrupt fall from the world of light to the material world. This last fall was caused by the objection of a group of creatures of light, the *muʿtariḍān* (Persian, objectors), to the decision of God to create human beings, because their inevitable wickedness would lead them to commit sins. This objection to God's decision, which is an unforgiven sin, caused the precipitate fall of this group into the material

137 *HA*, pp. 37–38; *AUH*, p. 72.
138 *HA*, pp. 38–39. The Nuṣayrīs believe that they are composed from one light; see *US*, fol. 30b–32a.
139 *HA*, pp. 41–42.

world.[140] The *muʿtariḍān* were called from then on the *muwaḥḥidūn* (monotheists), and later the Nuṣayrīs came to view themselves as these penalized creatures of light.

3.3 *God's education in his triple appearance*

A third tradition, which should be placed chronologically after the creation of the seven heavens and before the creation of Adam, appears in the *Kitāb al-usūs*, attributed to Mufaḍḍal, and is repeated almost identically in several Nuṣayrī sources. God educated the creatures of light by appearing to them in three forms: he appeared first in the form of an old man with white hair and beard, to show his dignity and mercy to his creatures and to teach them to respect him. His second appearance was as a young man with a curled mustache riding a lion, which expressed his anger, in order to warn them against disobedience. The third and final appearance was as little child in order to explain to them their situation as weak creatures who must be raised and educated.[141] In his *Masāʾil al-khāṣṣa*, al-Ṭabarānī notes that al-Jillī taught him that the three positions of the moon (crescent, full moon and the absence of moon) represent the triple appearance of God.[142]

The tradition of the fall from the ideal world into an inferior material world is central in Nuṣayrī medieval theology. Al-Khaṣībī refers to it throughout his *Dīwān*.[143] This tradition is defined as "the fall" (*habṭa*) but in medieval sources it is called rather "the day of the shades" (*yawm al-aẓilla*).[144] The account given by Sulaymān al-Adhanī of the *habṭa* in his *Bākūra al-Sulaymāniyya* is a combination of the three traditions mentioned.[145] They are all based on the

[140] *UK*, fol. 94–96; Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 123–128.

[141] *KU*, fol. 8b; see translation suggested for the text in Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 53. See this tradition in Nuṣayrī sources: *KHA*, p. 159 (an almost verbatim copy of the *Usūs* version); *RN*, p. 318; *RA*, p. 328; *HAD*, p. 34. According to these sources the boy who appears is 14 years old.

[142] *MKH*, pp. 197–198. See a more developed version of this tradition in the poem of Muḥammad ibn Kalāzū, in *BS*, p. 60 and the explanation in Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 53, n. 59. In this poem we find the formula h-b-q for *hilāl-badr-qamar* (crescent-full moon-moon), which does not exist in other sources of the sect.

[143] See, for example, *DKH*, fol. 7b, 20a, 39a, 51b, 101a.

[144] See, for example, *BD*, p. 138. The use of the term *habṭa* is rare in medieval sources, and usually refers to Adam, who was "taken down to earth" (*uhbiṭa fi ʾl-arḍ*); see *HAD*, p. 82.

[145] See this tradition abbreviated in the words of Sulaymān al-Adhanī, in *BS*,

Haft wa-'l-aẓilla, the *Kitāb al-usūs* of Mufaḍḍal and the *Umm al-kitāb* of Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh.

The fall that followed the sin caused the *muwaḥḥidūn* to be imprisoned as the rest of humanity in the material world. Nevertheless, only the *muwaḥḥidūn* still have a chance for salvation.

4. *Transmigration and prohibited foods*

Transmigration (in Nuṣayrī terminology *tanāsukh*, *naskh*, *naql*, *radd*, *karr*) is one of the fundamental doctrines of Nuṣayrism. The person wears a different "shirt" (*qamīṣ*) in each life, a term used also in Druze doctrines.[146] It is possible to find traces of belief in transmigration in the Qurʾān:

> Those whom God cursed and was angered with he turned into monkeys and pigs.
>
> (Qurʾān, al-Māʾida [5]: 60)

However, this belief is totally rejected in orthodox Islam, since it is regarded as contradictory to the doctrine of resurrection at the end of time. Nevertheless, some well-known Ṣūfī leaders were accused of teaching a doctrine of transmigration, for example Ḥallāj (d. 310/922), Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) and Rūmī (d. 672/1273). Some Muslim philosophers also held certain notions of transmigration, as for example al-Rāzī (d. 325/925), al-Farābī (d. 339/950) and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, the Ismāʿīlī mysterious Brothers of Purity, a secret society in tenth-century Iraq.[147] It is worth noting that several of the scholars who held this belief were contemporaries of al-Khaṣībī and lived in Iraq.

An attempt should be made to present a reasonable suggestion as to the origin of this doctrine. Transmigration was part of the doctrines of Ghulāt sects, long before the appearance of the Nuṣayriyya. There is a strong connection between belief in the eternal nature of the Imām and that of the concept of the eternal soul. Farhad Daftary notes that belief in the reincarnation of the Imām, or his return (*rajʿa*) after

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pp. 59–61, translated into French in Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 70–73.

[146] *KS*, fol. 99b.

[147] See J. I. Smith and Y. Y. Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 8, 112, 199 n. 15.

absence (*ghayba*), is close to and may even derive from the belief in the transmigration of the human soul.[148] The divinity passes from one Imām to his successor as the soul passes from one body to another. Therefore, it is quite natural that the doctrine of *tanāsukh* exists among the earliest Ghulāt.

Paul E. Walker's study of transmigration in Islam is relevant here. Walker tends to see the origins of this belief in Greek philosophy, mainly in the writings of Pythagoras, his disciple Plato, and finally in the writings of Plotinus.[149] According to this logic, transmigration was introduced to Islam through the rational Muʿtazilīs who were influenced by the Greek philosophers. They held that God's justice necessitates another life before or after the actual life, in order to explain the suffering of the innocent and the pleasure of evildoers.[150] However, another possible route is from the east rather than the west: the doctrine of transmigration is a central doctrine in the Hindu religion and infiltrated into Persian culture. In that case, the belief could have arrived in Iraq through Persian Manicheanism.[151] The existence of a doctrine of transmigration among the admirers of Abū Muslim in Khurasān may indicate such an influence from the east. As in Hindu religion, transmigration is considered a negative phenomenon because all matter is evil, and when the soul is once again imprisoned in a body it cannot ascend to the spiritual world.

In his article concerning the doctrine of transmigration among Jews in the tenth century, Haggai Ben Shamai begins with a short but thorough description of the development of this belief in Islam. His research reaffirms the hypothesis concerning the two major sources of this belief: Indian and Greek. The Greek influence derived from Muʿtazilī circles in the ninth and tenth centuries and involved a quest for God's justice in this world. The suffering of children and believers was explained by sins they had committed in their previous lives.

[148] Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, p. 66.

[149] P. E. Walker, "The doctrine of transmigration in Islam", in W. B. Hallaq and D. P. Little (eds.), *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp. 221–226, 230–231.

[150] Ibid., p. 226.

[151] The idea of transmigration, which is foreign to Zoroastrianism, is an established doctrine in the Manichean religion; see S. A. Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith: Tradition and Modern Research* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 118; N. K. Singh, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1997), p. 958.

Hindu influence on Islam was received indirectly through Iranian religions, for example the Manicheans and the Khurramiyya, and the Buddhist Samaniyya, who believed in compensation and punishment through transmigration, and rejected the idea of the Judgment Day. The idea of eternal transmigration was embraced by most of the Ghulāt sects, beginning with the Kaysāniyya, the Ḥarbiyya of ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya, and followed by the Khaṭṭābiyya.[152] However, this last point of Ben Shamai should be questioned, since all the information concerning these sects that no longer exist derives from hostile Muslim heresiographers. In particular, the assumption that "extremists Shīʿīs" rejected the idea of the Judgment Day should be viewed sceptically, since the Nuṣayrīs, who were mostly influenced by these Ghulāt, did not find any contradiction between transmigration and judgment at the end of time.

Ben Shamai cites the Persian theologian and historian al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048) as the most important Muslim source concerning the belief in transmigration in the Indian religions. Al-Bīrūnī noted that Mani's main activity was in India, hence Manichean belief in transmigration was a result of Indian influence.[153] Following other researchers, Ben Shamai agrees that belief in transmigration was rejected by the majority of the Jews in the tenth century, and the term *gilgul* (reincarnation) was absorbed at a later period in the theology of the Kabbala.[154] As such, Jewish belief in transmigration does not seem to be a source of inspiration for the Nuṣayrīs.

Bar-Asher and Kofsky discuss the subject of transmigration in Nuṣayrī religion and make a brief comparison between this doctrine and the Druze belief in transmigration. Their study is based on the *Kitāb al-usūs*, which contains interesting details concerning the connection between divine justice and transmigration.[155] Transmigration offers a solution for the existential paradox of suffering by the righteous, but does not answer the question of the source of evil in this world. The source of all evil and suffering is "original sin", which caused the fall.[156] Ever since the fall, the soul has transmigrated through seven

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[152] H. Ben Shamai, "Transmigration in tenth-century eastern Jewish thought" (in Hebrew), *Sefunot* 5/20 (1990–1), pp. 117–121.

[153] Ibid., pp. 123–124.

[154] Ibid., pp. 117, 125–136.

[155] Concerning the subject of transmigration, see the bibliography in Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 62, n. 117.

[156] Ibid., pp. 62–63.

bodies in seven cycles of time. But the more severe are a person's sins, the more inferior are the creatures into which his soul will transmigrate. According to the *Usūs*, the souls of Jews, for example, transmigrate into animals, but those of heretics transmigrate into sacrificial animals.[157] Bar-Asher and Kofsky conclude their discussion with the connection between transmigration and the religious prohibition of certain foods. They cite a relevant passage from the *Usūs*:

> It is forbidden to eat any transmigratory food [*mamsūkh*], for example an egg which has no two distinguished sides, fish with no scales, hare, pig, monkey and others.[158]

They note the interesting fact that all these foods are also proscribed by Jewish dietary laws.[159] Their important study is based on a pre-Nuṣayrī source and, as such, does not contain the complete doctrine of *tanāsukh* as developed by the founders of the sect. Heinz Halm's study of this doctrine is based on the *Haft wa-'l-aẓilla*, which also predates the Nuṣayrīs.[160] New available sources included in the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* offer a more complete picture of this doctrine. Nuṣayrī sources divide the foods into two groups: the first group is of those animals that had transmigrated from sinners, and which are proscribed. The second group is of creatures that were created as a result of the sins of the believers, and which it is permissible to consume.[161]

4.1 *Levels of transmigration*

In his *Risāla al-rāstbāshiyya*, al-Khaṣībī presents a crystallized doctrine of transmigration.[162] He explains that the term *tanāsukh* is the opposite of *maʿrifa* (gnosis/esoteric knowledge), since the gnosis is the only chance of escaping from transmigration and being exalted to the world of light. The sinner's transmigration occurs on five possible levels:

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[157] Ibid., pp. 63–65. See also in *BS*, p. 81.

[158] *KU*, fol. 55b. The translation used here is that offered in Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 65.

[159] Ibid., pp. 65–66.

[160] See H. Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis: Die extreme Schia und die ʿAlawiten* (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1982).

[161] *KHA*, p. 216; *HAD*, pp. 152, 158; *AAN*, p. 186.

[162] Transmigration is also one of the major issues in the *Dīwān* of Khasībī; see *DKH*, fol. 7b, 10a, 20a, 22b, 48a, 51b, 70b, 101a.

(1) *naskh* (replacement): passage of the soul from one human body to another.
(2) *maskh* (transformation): passage from a human body to that of an animal (some are prohibited as food and are considered impure).
Al-Khaṣībī cites in this context the verse from the Qurʾān concerning monkeys and pigs. Other "pure" animals are permitted as food and their milk and skin may also be used. The Nuṣayrīs believe that the souls of such animals leave their bodies before they are slaughtered.
(3) *waskh* (from *wasikh*, dirty): passage of the soul into the smallest creatures and grass dwellers, such as bats, rats, mice, lizards, beetles, worms and flies. It should be noted that bees are not mentioned here for their mystical symbolism; this is discussed later.
(4) *faskh* (from the verb *tafassakha*, to separate): the soul is separated from the body of a sinner in his lifetime and passes into the body of a sick man. The sick man's soul is transferred into the body of another sinner. As a result, the person changes his nature until his family and friends do not know him anymore.
(5) *raskh* (from the verb *tarassakha*, to stay in the same position): the soul is transferred into inanimate matter, such as gold, silver, iron, stone or dry wood. The soul suffers when these materials are burned and finally remains with its residue forever in the ground.[163]

This terminology of the degrees of transmigration also appears in the writings of Bīrūnī[164] as well as some of the later Sūfī circles, such as the schools of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273)[165] and Quṭb al-Dīn from Shiraz (d. 711/1311).[166]

The second *sūra* of the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* speaks of seven degrees of transmigration, the five mentioned above with the addition of two others: *qashh* (straw) and *qushshāsh* (waste),[167] which refer to the most inferior levels of transmigration. These two terms derive from the economic world, meaning "worthless". In the Geniza documents, for

[163] *RR*, pp. 64–65.
[164] Ben Shamai, "Transmigration in tenth-century eastern Jewish thought", p. 124.
[165] S. Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought: A Mavlevi Sufi Perspective* (Somerset, N.J.: The Light Inc., 2004), p. 237.
[166] J. Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the East: Suhrawardi and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 77.
[167] *BS*, pp. 10–11.

example, these terms are used for the second-hand clothes in a bazaar of Cairo.[168] The theological explanation for the *qashh* and *qashshāsh* are given a medieval source, the *Kitāb al-badʾ wa-ʾl-iʿāda* by the disciple of al-Khaṣībī, al-Ḥusayn ibn Hārūn al-Baghdādī. According to him, they refer to the most inferior and weak creatures on earth such as bugs, flies, ants, lice and fleas, which are cursed with never being able to sleep, to copulate or to reproduce.[169]

4.2 *The process of transmigration and the "fountain of life"*

While the gnosis, the *maʿrifa*, leads to heaven, the transmigration into inferior creatures (*musūkhiyyāt*) is considered hell.[170] It should be noted that the Nuṣayrī mystics are also doomed to transmigration, since they were creatures of light who had disobeyed God, but only eighty times before they are saved.[171] Al-Khaṣībī gives details concerning the process of transmigration. The soul of a dead man passes through the sperm into a woman's womb. While he dwells there he remembers the *yawm al-aẓilla* and his previous lives. This memory also lasts for the first twenty-four months of breastfeeding. Then he forgets everything. This process is painful for both a believer and a sinner. But the latter suffers much more and cries more at his birth, because he remembers his sins and is aware of his ill fate.[172]

Other Nuṣayrī leaders, such as al-Jillī, al-Ṭabarānī and Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba, speak of an interim stage between death and the entrance into the woman's womb. According to their explanation, after death the soul is taken by angels to the "fountain of life" (*ʿayn al-ḥayāt*) where it is purified and waits until a pregnancy begins in the material world. When this happens, the angels call to the soul: Go! (*sīrī*!) and it reaches its destination.[173] Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba adds some more details: the angels transmit the names of every soul that passes through the "fountain of

[168] S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 150, 437 n. 5.

[169] *BI*, p. 452.

[170] *RR*, p. 66; *HUA*, p. 25.

[171] *DKH*, fol. 7a, 67a.

[172] *RR*, pp. 62–64.

[173] *BD*, pp. 139–140; *MKH*, p. 199; *HAD*, p. 147. In orthodox Islam we find "the river of life" (*nahr al-ḥayāt*) in the Prophet Muḥammad's description of heaven; see Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi-sharḥ al-Nawawī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1990), vol. 3, *Kitāb al-Īmān*, p. 32.

life" to the Imāms. The souls wear a form of light in the fountain. He mentions also a "fountain of humiliation" (*ʿayn al-ridhāl*) where the sinners dwell.[174]

This "fountain of life" seems to be based on the Qurʾānic *Salsabīl* (Qurʾān, al-Insān [76]: 18), a fountain situated in heaven and surrounded by childlike angels. However, the term is not typical of Muslim theology. It is similar to the Jewish *The Fountain of Life* (*Fons Vitae*; Hebrew *Mekōr ḥayīm*) of the Jewish Spanish poet Ibn Gabirol (d. 450/1058). Ibn Gabirol was much influenced by Neoplatonism, mainly through al-Farābī (d. 339/950).[175] In his book, Ibn Gabirol speaks about the soul's imprisonment in nature and the need to exalt the intellect in order to purify it.[176] However, it is the Jewish scholar Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 563/1167) who clearly refers to the *Mekōr ḥayīm* as the place where souls are purified, based on Psalm 36:10: "With You is the fountain of life, by Your light do we see light".[177] It seems that both medieval Jewish scholars and Nuṣayrīs were influenced by the same Neoplatonic source. Plotinus, inspired by Pythagoras and Plato, speaks of the "fountain of life" as the source of souls.[178] In Nuṣayrī theology, the fountain is personalized in the figure of Salmān al-Fārisī. Salmān's mystical pseudonym Salsal, an abbreviated form of Salsabīl, which appears in the *Umm al-kitāb*, is very common in Nuṣayrī writings. Al-Khasībī explains that this name is the result of ʿAlī's address to him: *sal sabīlak ilayya!* (seek your path to me!), or *sal al-ism* (seek the *ism* [through me]), and the meaning of Salmān's name is *sal al-mānn*! (seek [through him] the one who grants grace!).[179] Salmān's identification with the fountain of life seems to be based on the explanation of al-Khasībī, which is repeated by his followers, that Salmān is the personification (*shakhṣ*) of water.[180] In addition to the purifying meaning of water, its power is reflected by the ability to extinguish fire, which

[174] *HAD*, ibid.

[175] H. Kreisel, *Prophecy: The History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), p. 105.

[176] P. Cole, *Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 243–244.

[177] A. Tanenbaum, *The Contemplative Soul: Hebrew Poetry and Philosophical Theory in Medieval Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 101–102.

[178] See, for example, E. Underhill, *Mysticism* (Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), p. 281. This is a reprinted version of her 1911 book.

[179] *RR*, p. 59.

[180] *FRR*, p. 119.

symbolizes the devil. Al-Khasībī dedicates a poem in his *Dīwān* to this subject, beginning with the following lines:

> Water is an honorable person (*shakhṣ*) / from which life is extended
> And the inner meaning of water is a person / he is the sent guide
> And everything comes from him / his life never ends[181]

4.3 *Transmigration in Nuṣayrī and Druze doctrines*

Some notes should be added to the brief discussion by Bar-Asher and Kofsky of the belief in transmigration held by the Druzes and the Nuṣayrīs. Ḥamza, the Druze propagandist, attacks the Nuṣayrī belief in transmigration, which seems to him illogical:

> As to his claim [that of the Nuṣayrī] that the souls of the objectors and the opponents [*aḍdād*, of the Imāms] are transformed into dogs, monkeys and pigs to the level of white-hot iron beaten by a hammer, others to birds and owls, and others are transmigrated into a woman who lost her son: he [the Nuṣayrī] lied upon our Lord [the Druze divine incarnation, al-Ḥākim] may His memory be exalted, and he spread a grave deceit, because this matter is illogical and it contradicts the justice of our Lord, the praised one, that a person would sin against him [al-Ḥākim] and He would punish an intelligent person by transforming him [after transmigration] into the form of a dog or pig, [knowing] that he cannot understand what he did when he had a human form and does not know [anymore] what his sin was. If he turns into a white-hot iron beaten with a hammer what is the benefit [Arabic *ḥikma*, literally wisdom] of it and that of the torment in these [transmigrations]. The benefit [or wisdom] from the torment is that a person would understand and the torment, would educate him and cause him to repent. As to the torment it is the transmigration of a person from a high level of belief to an inferior level.[182]

The contradiction between the Druze and Nuṣayrī concepts of transmigration reflects a much older conflict between two points of view held by the great Neoplatonic philosophers of the third century. For example, while Plotinus believed in several levels of transmigration, the Syrian Porphyry rejected the possibility that a soul could pass from one frame to another.[183] Muslim philosophers also dealt with this issue;

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[181] *DKH*, fol. 64b–65a.
[182] Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī, *al-Risāla al-dāmigha*, fol. 12b–13a.
[183] M. J. Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints: The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. xxxii, n. 83.

Suhrawardī accepted the idea of transmigration of the human soul to an animal body, but rejected transmigration into plants, which lack intelligence.[184]

Although most researchers in the field of sects in Islam consider transmigration an example of the similarity of Druze and Nuṣayrī doctrines, there is a huge doctrinal gap between the two points of view, the Druze concept being positive, and the Nuṣayrī negative. While the former gives the soul another chance to correct his sins and purify his soul, the latter is merely a means of retribution. The reason for this fundamental difference seems to be that the Druzes focus on the *ʿadl*, divine justice, while the Nuṣayrīs emphasise the concepts of *qaḍāʾ* and *qadar* (divine decree and predestination), terms repeated in their sources.[185] While the Nuṣayrīs believe that human fate was predetermined in the *yawm al-aẓilla*, the Druzes believe that divine justice necessitates the existence of a choice between right and wrong.[186]

It is important to note that transmigrations in Nuṣayrī theology, as in the Druze religion,[187] are limited and end with Judgment Day, and as such, this doctrine does not contradict the Muslim apocalyptic concept of messianic salvation. Al-Khaṣībī explains that the sinners, called "the people of denial and sin" (*ahl al-inkār wa-ʾl-juḥūd*) pass through 100,000 transmigrations and the believers, "the people of acceptance" (*ahl al-iqrār*) only 80, until the coming of Judgment Day, or "the day of revelation and appearance" (*yawm al-kashf wa-ʾl-ẓuhūr*).[188]

The belief in transmigration is linked with the Nuṣayrī concept of time. Since life is described as a cyclic process of death and rebirth, time is also cyclic.

5. *Cyclic history*

The Nuṣayrī concept of history is cyclic. History repeats itself in historical cycles of time in different variations. In each cycle seven mes-

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[184] M. Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), p. 81.

[185] See for example: *KHA*, p. 195; *HAD*, pp. 121–122; *KT*, pp 319–348.

[186] Firro, *History of the Druzes*, pp. 11–12; N. Dana, *The Druze in the Middle East: Their Faith, Leadership, Identity and Status* (Brighton/Portland, Or.: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), pp. 60–61.

[187] Dana, ibid., p. 61. In this doctrine the Nuṣayrīs differ from the Imāmī Shīʿīs who believe in free will. See, for example, A. J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shīʿism* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), p. 118; Halm, *Shīʿism*, pp. 49–50.

[188] *FRR*, p. 137; *DKH*, fol. 7a, 67a.

sengers or prophets of God, called the *Āwādim* (pl. of *Ādam*), appear each time to another society. History is formed of large cycles that contain small cycles of time.[189] They are called *akwār* (sing. *kawr*, eon) and *adwār* (sing. *dawr*, era). The calculation of this time and the definition of these terms differ from one Nuṣayrī source to another. The term *dawr* appears in the doctrine of ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya. According to al-Nawbakhtī, this last *ghālī*, who also believed in transmigration and in the doctrines of the shades (*aẓilla*), transmitted these doctrines to Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh and to Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Juʿfī.[190] The term *kawr* is also used in the similar Ismāʿīlī doctrine of the cycles of time.[191]

In Ibn Nuṣayr's writings traditions are found concerning the cycles of time in the world of light followed by other cycles in human history in the material world. In his *Kitāb al-akwār wa-'l-adwār*, based on the tradition of Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh,[192] there is another period of time which preceded human history and contained ten cycles called *akwār*, each of 100,000 years, marking a separation between each event in the world of light.[193] After these millions of years, human history began. In his *Mithāl wa-'l-ṣūra*, Ibn Nuṣayr cites a tradition transmitted by the mystic ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-ʿAqīqī, in which the Imām Jaʿfar says that history contains seven *akwār*, each consisting of 7,000 years or, according to another tradition, every *kawr* contains 400 *adwār*, and every *dawr* consists of 50,000 years.[194]

Later Nuṣayrī writers give different proposals as to the length of the cycles. Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba mentions two different traditions, the first based on Mufaḍḍal's transmission from the Imām Jaʿfar, using other terms for time. According to his tradition, the time that preceded human history includes 12,000 *qibāb* each of 12,000 *abwāb* (sing. *bāb*, gate). Each *bāb* consists of 12,000 years.[195] According to another tradition, transmitted from ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-ʿAqīqī, human history contains 400,000 *akwār*, each of 400,000 years. In each *kawr*, the seven *Āwādim* appeared: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus,

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[189] Dussaud's assumption that Nuṣayrī history is based on seven cycles is derived mainly from the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, as is his hypothesis of Ismāʿīlī influence; Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 42–43; repeated in Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, p. 312.

[190] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, pp. 34–35.

[191] Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrine*, p. 295.

[192] *AAN*, p. 41.

[193] Ibid., pp. 48–51.

[194] *MS*, p. 227.

[195] *HAD*, p. 79.

Muḥammad and his family (ʿAlī, Fāṭima and the Imāms).[196] Another tradition, transmitted by al-Khaṣībī and also attributed to the Imām Jaʿfar, maintains that history contains 50,000 *adwār*, each *dawr* contains 50,000 *akwār*, each consisting of 400,000 years.[197]

5.1 *The* qibāb *and the historical concept of time*

In addition to the terms *kawr* and *dawr*, which seem to have been inherited from the Ghulāt and are found in the writing of Mufaḍḍal,[198] the Nuṣayrīs developed a parallel terminology of time, using the term *qubba* (pl. *qibāb*). This term, which means "dome", "mausoleum" or "crown", reflects a cyclic process within the close and limited space created by God.

Since the Nuṣayrīs possess an apocalyptic doctrine, their concept of time cannot be completely cyclic. It has some linear aspects with a beginning and an end, and it repeats itself only in its esoteric (*bāṭin*) sense, not in its exoteric (*ẓāhir*) aspect. We can therefore conclude that Nuṣayrī time is a combination of cyclic and linear history, or in other words a spiral concept of time. E. H. Carr noted that the cyclic concept of history was an innovation of the monotheistic religions as opposed to the haphazard historical view of pagan cultures.[199] Monotheistic history is teleological and has a beginning and an end. However, his suggestion that the mystical view of history is detached from the concepts of time and place does not fit the Nuṣayrī example. The Nuṣayrīs possessed a solid sense of territory and chronological time. The *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* reflects not only a clear idea of religious chronological history, but also a concept of a quasi-world history which contains a vast territory. Al-Ṭabarānī mentions the following: Greece, Armenia, Bulgaria, Syria, Iraq, Iran, the Arabian Peninsula, India, Ethiopia, Egypt, China, and the Turkish tribes.[200]

The term *qubba*[201] seems to have been first used by the Kufan mystic Muḥammad ibn Sinān ("al-Ḥakīm", the wise, d. 220/835). His *Anwār*

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[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid., 90.
[198] See, for example, the use of the term *adwār* in *HA*, pp. 116–117.
[199] E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 144–176.
[200] See the index of Strothmann to *MA*, in "Maimun Ibn el-Kasim von Tiberias: Festkalender der Nusairier", *Der Islam* 27 (1946), pp. 255–259.
[201] See the interesting explanation concerning this term in Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, 29 n. 110.

wa-'l-ḥujub is the oldest known source in which this term is used. He explains that the term *qubba* actually refers to the period of the Imāms beginning with ʿAlī.[202] However, it is the Nuṣayrī sect that adopted this term and used it intensively to define historical cycles of time. The first to use this term was al-Khaṣībī, in his *Siyāqa*,[203] then al-Jillī in his *Bāṭin al-ṣalāt*.[204] However, the doctrine of the *qibāb* becomes crystallized mainly in al-Tabarānī's writings. In his *Dalāʾil fi-'l-masāʾil*, al-Tabarānī explains that in *hādhihi 'l-qubba* (this *qubba*) or the *qubbat al-Muḥammadiyya*, the divinity appeared to everybody, to mystics as well as to normal believers (*li-'l-khāṣṣ wa-'l-ʿāmm*), because this was the last *qubba* before Judgment Day.[205]

In the *qibāb*, as in the case of the *akwār* and *adwār*, there are prehistorical cycles, which belong to the period that preceded the fall. Bar-Asher and Kofsky note, based on the *Bākūra* and the Catechism of Paris Ms. 6182, the existence of seven cycles of time (*al-qibāb al-sab*ʿ).[206] However, what they call the "enigmatic names" of these periods should be explained in order to understand this doctrine. The names of these primordial cycles express a negative process leading towards the fall. This is the reason why the first letters of the first four cycles (*ḥinn, binn*, *timm*, *rimm*) create the name Ḥabtar (fox), a nickname for Abū Bakr, who is considered the personification of the devil in Nuṣayrī belief. The next two primordial cycles are named for the two kinds of demons who serve the devil: *Jānn* and *Jinn* (sing. *Jinnī*).[207] The following *qibāb* divide human history into parts. In every *qubba* the eight aspects of the divinity, or the triad and the subordinated pentad, were personified by those whom the Nuṣayrīs consider the most pious society of the time. In other words, every revelation is given the name of the most important persons or culture of its time:

al-qubba al-Ādamiyya, after Adam;[208]
al-qubba al-Nūḥiyya, period of Noah and the deluge;[209]

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202 *AUH*, p. 82.
203 See, for example, *RS* (included in *RR*), p. 54.
204 *KBS*, pp. 224–225.
205 *DM*, p. 132.
206 Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 184, n. 114.
207 *TDN*, answer to question 43, compare with *BS*, pp. 61–62. The addition of a seventh cycle appears only in al-Adhanī's book.
208 *MA*, p. 213; *BS*, pp. 204–205.
209 *MA*, p. 381.

al-qubba al-Ibrāhīmiyya, period of the Hebrew patriarchs;[210]
al-qubba al-Mūsawiyya, period of Moses;[211]
al-qubba al-Kanahwariyya, a weird antique Persian period, which appears only in al-Ṭabarānī's *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*;[212]
al-qubba al-Fārisiyya, period of the Persian kings before the Islamic period;[213]
al-qubba al-Hāshimiyya, after the great-grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad, Arab pre-Islamic period;[214]
al-qubba al-Muḥammadiyya, after the Prophet Muḥammad, the period of Islam, also called *hādhihi 'l-qubba* (this cycle, or the actual cycle).[215]

To these cycles al-Ṭabarānī adds a cycle called *al-qubba al-ṭālibiyya* from the verb *ṭalaba* (to seek after the name Abū Ṭālib, father of ʿAlī). It is also called *al-maqāmāt al-ṭālibiyya*, which is another dimension of time and exists only for mystics who ascend to the divine world.[216] The *maqāmāt* (sing. *maqām*) is a well-known Ṣūfī term for the seven stations in the mystic's path.[217]

The lists or tables of the *qibāb* and the emanated persons (*shakhṣ*, pl. *ashkhāṣ*) who appear with the deity in each cycle are not organized in Nuṣayrī medieval sources. The similarity of these lists, in the sect's available sources, may indicate that the Nuṣayrīs possessed tables containing all the personifications of every cycle, as they had in the case of the *ahl al-marātib*. Apart from the names found in al-Khaṣībī's *Siyāqa*, a list of *ashkhāṣ* in each cycle is also found also in the Nuṣayrī

[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid., pp. 94, 381; *BS*, pp. 204–205.
[212] Al-Ṭabarānī explains that the word *Kanahwar* is known only to the Persians and refers to the period of Bahmān (see below); see *MA*, pp. 211–212, 225. The word *Kanahwar* could not be found in Persian. It is a rare word in Arabic, meaning a group of clouds; it appears in the 90th speech of ʿAlī in the *Nahj al-balāgha*; see Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-lugha* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2001), vol. 6, p. 270; Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995), vol. 2, p. 218.
[213] *MA*, p. 213.
[214] Ibid., p. 213; *RS*, question 55 in: *RR*, p. 54.
[215] *MA*, in many places; see, for example, pp. 19, 95, 107; *BS*, pp. 224–225.
[216] *MA*, pp. 213, 228.
[217] See, for example, M. A. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qurʾan, Miraj Poetic and Theological Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), pp. 196–197.

catechism.[218] Although history contains cycles of time and the divinity appears in different forms, the *bāṭin*, which is the esoteric contents of the divine message, remains the same, and only the *ẓāhir*, the external content, changes, as al-Ṭabarānī explains:

> The religious laws [*sharāʾiʿ*, sing. *sharīʿa*] in their internal meaning are all the same although in their external form they are different, all the *qibāb* are one and the *nāṭiq* (the divine speech) is one because it is the *mīm* [Muḥammad] in all the appearances.[219]

Although history has an end and the Nuṣayrīs do have an apocalyptic doctrine, there is a means of escape from the material world before Judgment Day. In other words, the sect combines a regular Muslim religious concept of history with a timeless concept of the mystical path. Time in the material world is combined with the timeless path of the mystic returning to the divine world of light: a mystic's soul transmigrates in the cycles of history, but at the same time he can ascend in each lifetime to a higher degree of spirituality. When he eventually achieves the world of light he is disconnected from human history, he ceases undergoing transmigration, and he becomes part of the *ahl al-marātib*.

6. *The Gnostic mystical elevation*: maʿrifa *and* ṣirāṭ

The Nuṣayrī belief in the *habṭa* (fall) and the creation of a double cosmos, spiritual and material, reflects a predetermined concept of permanent punishment. However, according to the Nuṣayrī doctrine there is a possibility for a small minority of pious mystics to return to the divine world by a long and gradual process. The attachment to the *ahl al-marātib* is possible since their most inferior emanations exist in the material world. By studying the secret knowledge, which was lost in the fall, and following the guidance of a shaykh who has gained an exalted degree of gnosis (*maʿrifa* or *ʿilm*), one can achieve a higher spiritual degree. The members of the sect believe that their knowledge, which is learnt by heart or through the study of their religious books,

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218 See *TDN*, questions 13–44, in: Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 203–210.

219 *DM*, p. 132.

is the key to being released from the evil material world.[220] This process of the mystic (the owner of the inner knowledge, the *ʿārif*) begins with the initiation into the mystical circle of the sect. Since the initiation concerns primarily the issue of the Nuṣayrī identity, it is discussed separately in Chapter 3. The mystical path is called the *ṣirāṭ*, the spiritual path towards the *bāb*.

The term *ṣirāṭ* is known in orthodox Islam as the bridge over hell leading to paradise on the Day of Resurrection, but its original meaning in the Qurʾān is simply "the path of God".[221] In the terminology of the sect, the mystics are "walking" (*sālikūn*, sing. *sālik*)[222] in the *ṣirāṭ* and crossing over seven "obstacles" (*ʿiqāb* or *ʿaqabāt*, sing. *ʿaqaba*), also called "the obstacles of the material world" (*al-ʿaqabāt al-sufliyya*). The more the Nuṣayrī mystic progresses in the study of the *ʿilm al-tawḥīd* and is strenghthened by the acceptance (*iqrār*) of its truth, the more he will be able to confront his own doubts (*shukūk*, sing. *shakk*) which are the main reason for the delay of his progress. The *ahl al-iqrār* (people of acceptance), or the mystics, ascend the *ṣirāṭ*, as opposed to the *ahl al-inkār wa-ʾl-juḥūd* (people of denial and repudiation) who stay imprisoned in the material world. These sinners are doomed to descend in the levels of transmigration. Once the mystic reaches the highest degree, he is freed from the material world and the punishment of transmigration from one body to another. Then he can continue his path until he attains the *bāb* and the secrets of the divinity become unveiled to him. According to some sources, the mystic who attains the world of light becomes visible to the material world as a star in the sky.[223]

The Nuṣayrī sources use other mystical terminology for the process of ascending the *ṣirāṭ*: The ascent (*irtiqāʾ*) of the mystic is his passage from the human degree (*nāsūtiyya*) into the spiritual luminous degree (*nūrāniyya*), until he attains purification (*ṣafāʾ*).[224] The term *ṣafāʾ* is well known from Ṣūfī terminology and is even used as one of the explana-

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220 *DKH*, fol. 9a, 38b, 83b.

221 In the Qurʾān the term *ṣirāṭ* appears 32 times as the path of God; see Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, *al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li-alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-karīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1988), p. 407. In most of the cases it is called *ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (the righteous path). One exception is the *ṣirāṭ al-jaḥīm* which is the "path to hell" for the sinner; see Qurʾān, al-Ṣāfāt (37), 23.

222 See, for example, the use of the term in *DMS*, p. 59.

223 *RB*, pp. 279–281; *RR*, pp. 60–62.

224 *RR*, p. 62; RB, p. 281; *RM*, p. 299.

tions for the Arabic word *ṣūfī*.[225] In the Nuṣayrī religion the term *ṣafāʾ* seems to derive from the doctrine of Mufaḍḍal. In Muḥammad ibn Sinān's *Kitāb al-ḥujub wa-ʾl-anwār*, the author is taught by Mufaḍḍal that the study of esoteric knowledge leads to purification and the passage from this world, which is "the house of trial" (*dār al-miḥna*) into the luminous "house of eternity" (*dār al-khuld*). In Muḥammad ibn Sinān's text, the spiritual path is also defined in terms of time, as "the cycle of trial" (*qubbat al-miḥna*), since it involves a process in which the mystic gradually ascends to a higher spiritual level after several transmigrations.[226] The term *ṣirāṭ* is not an exclusive to the Nuṣayrīs; it is also used in Ismāʿīlī literature to describe the path of the believer's soul to purity, as in the writings of the Persian poet and philosopher Nāṣir Khusraw (d. 481/1088).[227]

Although the possibility of returning to the world of light exists, it is meant only for a small group of pious mystics. According to Nuṣayrī sources, there are strict rules as to who is permitted to begin his journey to the *ṣirāṭ*. Besides a person's religious righteousness, he must not have any bodily defect,[228] perhaps because this is a proof of sins in a previous life.

The main source of study of the *ṣirāṭ* for the Nuṣayrī initiates is Mufaḍḍal's *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ*, which was added to the Nuṣayrī canon in the time of al-Khaṣībī, as can be concluded from its chain of transmitters. This source was studied by Bar-Asher and Kofsky in comparison with other Nuṣayrī sources, mainly Mufaḍḍal's *Kitāb al-usūs* and Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba's *Kitāb al-uṣayfir*. According to these sources, the obstacles to the mystic's ascent reflect the devil's efforts to hurt the believers. The hierarchical structure of the spiritual degrees is the result of the emanations from the time of the creation of the cosmos. Thus, the mystic needs the help of a person in a higher rank in order to progress. When he reaches the divinity, he is not bound by earthly laws and is not obliged to observe the laws of religion. Bar-Asher and Kofsky consider this doctrine an explanation for the sect's

225 See, for example, M. Valiuddin, *The Quranic Sufism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003), pp. 1–2.
226 *HUA*, pp. 46, 58.
227 F. M. Hunzai, *Knowledge and Liberation: A Treatise on Philosophical Theology* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998), pp. 18, 104, 106, 124–125.
228 *JK*, p. 25.

antinomianism.[229] However, as is shown below, the Nuṣayrī leaders did not allow the mystics to neglect their religious duties.

According to Bar-Asher and Kofsky, the doctrine of the *ṣirāṭ* defines the terms "paradise" and "hell" in an approach that is different from the one known in orthodox monotheistic religions. Since the material world is evil, transmigration that prevents release from it is hell. The gnosis is the path to paradise, which is the return to the original pre-fall state in the world of light. This process is described in the *Usūs* in terms of ascending a ladder (*sullam*) towards paradise. Once a person arrives at the highest level where he meets the *bāb*, he achieves perfect knowledge and all the secrets of the universe are unveiled to him.[230] Here again, the Nuṣayrīs use the same terminology as the Ismāʿīlīs as well as the Ṣūfīs. The term was used in the *Sullam al-najāt* (ladder of salvation) by the Persian Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī, an important Neoplatonist Ismāʿīlī propagandist from the tenth century.[231] We also find the use of the symbol of the *sullam* in the poetry of the well-known Ṣūfī scholar Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240).[232] Ibn al-ʿArabī used another term that was common in the Nuṣayrī religion, the *isrāʾ*, the Night Journey, in the sense of a spiritual ascension.[233]

6.1 *The* isrāʾ: *an elevation in the divine world*

The use of the term *isrāʾ* is similar in Nuṣayrī and Ṣūfī doctrines. The Night Journey of the Prophet Muḥammad from the "holy mosque"

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[229] M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, "L'ascension céleste du gnostique nusayrite et le voyage nocturne du prophète Muḥammad", in M. A. Amir-Moezzi (ed.), *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'Islam: Ascension célestes et itinéraires spirituelles* (Paris: Louvain, 1996), pp. 133–148.

[230] Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 77–83.

[231] Concerning this book, see F. Daftary, "Intellectual life among the Ismailis: An overview", in F. Daftary (ed.), *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 95–96.

[232] See, for example A. E. I. Falconar, *Sufi Literature and the Journey to Immortality* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991), pp. 165, 159, 178; Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 68, 78, 132; *US*, fol. 61a.

[233] See information concerning Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Kitāb al-isrāʾ*, in C. Twinch and P. Beneito (trans.), *Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries and the Rising of the Divine Light* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2001), pp. 2–6. The *isrāʾ* is also interpreted as a spiritual ascent of the mystics in later Sūfī orders, such as the fourteenth-century Naqshbandiyya. This last order also uses the term *sulūk* for following the mystical path, almost identical to the Nuṣayrī term *sālik*; see A. F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 258.

(*al-bayt al-ḥarām*) to the "most distant mosque" (*al-masjid al-aqṣā*), mentioned in the Qurʾān (al-Isrāʾ [17]:1) is not explained in geographical terms. It is interpreted as a mystical ascension to a higher spiritual degree. Nevertheless, while the Ṣūfīs use the term *isrāʾ* to describe a human experience, the Nuṣayrīs attribute the *isrāʾ* only to heavenly creatures from the *ahl al-marātib*. This difference derives from the fact that, unlike in the Ṣūfī tradition, Muḥammad is regarded not as a human being but as a personification of the *ism*. Hence, for the Nuṣayrīs the *isrāʾ* is a phenomenon of the world of light, not a model of the Prophet for his believers.

Bar-Asher and Kofsky offer an explanation for this doctrine based on the text of the Baghdadian member of the sect, Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh, which preserves the teaching of his master al-Khaṣībī. According to this document, the *isrāʾ* is the ascent of an emanated creature of light towards the *maʿnā*. The example given by Hārūn is that of the ascent of first *yatīm* al-Miqdād to the degree of the *bāb* Salmān. In the mystical interpretation, the journey of the Prophet Muḥammad with the angel Jibrīl to the *masjid al-aqṣā*, is replaced by the ascent of al-Miqdād with the *bāb* Salmān. For the Nuṣayrīs, the "holy mosque" is the *ism*/*hijāb* and the "most distant mosque" is the *maʿnā*.[234]

Although the doctrine of the *isrāʾ* appears in Nuṣayrī literature, it seems to be only a marginal part of the sect's theology. Even though it became a subject of discussion in the *majlis* of al-Jisrī in Baghdad, it is rarely discussed in other sources. An explanation of al-Khaṣībī, in *Fiqh al-risāla al-rāstbāshiyya*, of a tradition that was transmitted by Ibn Nuṣayr from the Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, was probably the source of al-Jisrī's later discussion in his *majlis*. According to al-Khaṣībī's explanation of this tradition, the *bāb* Salmān is the door to the *ism* and the latter is identified with the "holy mosque". The "most distant mosque" is interpretated as the *maʿnā*.[235] This explanation is rarely repeated in the sect's later sources. There are only two brief mentions of it, in al-Jillī's *Bāṭin al-ṣalāt*[236] and in al-Ṭabarānī's *Risāla al-murshida*.[237] In the sect's

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234 Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 86–88, 91–95. *Al-masjid al-aqṣā* is translated as "the most distant mosque" rather than "the further mosque", as suggested by Bar-Asher and Kofsky. The translation of *al-aqṣā* in this context reflects the transcendental nature of the *maʿnā*.

235 See in *FRR*, p. 126.

236 *KBS*, p. 244.

237 *RMU*, p. 172.

sources from the nineteenth century, such as the Catechism and the *Bākūra*, this doctrine does not appear at all. The reason for the marginalization of this doctrine seems to be its contradiction of a more important doctrine, that of the *siyāqa*. The major principle of the *siyāqa*, the order of appearances of the divine aspects, is that none of the divine triad and pentad can appear in the form of a superior being. An ascent of a part of the divinity to a higher level would completely contradict the *siyāqa*, because it would enable, for example, the highest part of the pentad, al-Miqdād, to reach the highest rank of the superior triad, the *maʿnā*. Since there is no text that resolves the contradiction between the two doctrines, a likely explanation is that it caused confusion among the Nuṣayrīs, and the doctrine of the *siyāqa* superseded that of the *isrāʾ*. The only possible way to avoid the contradiction between the two doctrines is to assume that each deals with a different issue. The *siyāqa* is an explanation of the order of the appearance of the deity in human history, while the *isrāʾ* focuses on transitions that occurs only in the divine world.

7. *Demonology and the personification of Iblīs*

The presence of evil creatures in the world is mentioned and explained in most of the Nuṣayrī writings. The existence of a developed doctrine of demonology in Nuṣayrī religion does not seem extraordinary, considering the fact that the devil is present as an active figure already in the Qurʾān.[238] Hence, all the fundamental Nuṣayrī demonic terminology derives from Muslim theology. Iblīs (king and father of the demons)[239] and his *shayāṭīn* (sing. *shayṭān*, Satan or devil) exist as shadows of the creatures of light: they follow them everywere and are created as a result of their bad actions.

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[238] Apart from the frequent mention of Iblīs, king and father of the devils, chapter 72 of the Qurʾān is called Sūrat al-jinn, and provides the interesting affirmation of *tawḥīd* even among the *jinn*s.

[239] Mufaḍḍal explains that the meaning of Iblīs derives from the verb *ablasa* (equivalent to the verb *āyasa*, meaning "to despair") because his ignorance led him to despair of God's mercy. See *HA*, p. 49. This explanation is known in orthodox Islam. See, for example, S. R. al-Mubarakpuri, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Riyadh/London/New York: Darussalam, 2002), vol. 4, p. 29. But another explanation, which seems equally logical, is that the name Iblīs derives from the Greek *diabolos*; see A. Campisi, *Lessico Della Teologia Islamica* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2002), p. 20.

7.1 *A hierarchy of evil*

According to Nuṣayrī theology, based on ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya's *Kitāb al-marātib wa-'l-daraj*, God created a dual world of light and darkness, reflected in the natural order of day and night. Unlike the creatures of light, the creatures of darkness were not created as a result of an emanational process, but as a result of evil acts and the denial of God's existence. In other words, the sins of the creatures of light created evil creatures that have an order of existence parallel to that of the *ahl al-marātib*. There are seven ranks called *marātib al-kufr* (literally "ranks of disbelief", better defined as "ranks of evil").[240] Contrary to the *ahl al-marātib*, the ranks of evil are not specified, but are given only general descriptions. In the writings of Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba there is a description of the *jinna* (sing. *jinn*, demon) and the *arwāḥ* (sing. *rūḥ*, ghost), which are invisible creatures or souls without bodies that can intervene or harm human beings.[241] Al-Ṭabarānī, based on a tradition transmitted from Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh, gives a detailed description of Iblīs, an ugly and terrifying creature possessing most of the human defects.[242] Mufaḍḍal's *Haft wa-'l-aẓilla* provides a detailed account of the creation of Iblīs from fire, his rebellion against God, and his enmity towards humanity from the time of Adam. According to the *Haft*, Iblīs gave birth to the *shayāṭīn* who are the *aḍdād* (sing. *ḍidd*, opposite), or enemies of all *ahl al-marātib* and the believers.[243] The term *aḍdād* is often used in Shīʿī literature to define the enemies of the Imāms.[244]

Even the divine triad is shadowed by negative forms. The most important appearances of the evil triad are those considered to be the greatest villains of ancient history: Pharaoh, Haman and Korah (Arabic Firʿawn, Hāmān and Qārūn). These three appear with some differences in both the Hebrew Bible and the Qurʾān as rebels against God and his prophets. They stood against the divine appearances in the persons of Joshua, Moses and Aaron. In the period of the Prophet Muḥammad, the *qubba al-Muḥammadiya*, the evil triad of ʿUmar-Abū Bakr-ʿUthmān appears in opposition to the divine ʿAlī-Muḥammad-Salmān.

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[240] See the citation from *Kitāb al-marātib wa-'l-Daraj*, in *HAD*, p. 83.
[241] *HAD*, p. 100.
[242] *JK*, p. 27; *KSS*, included in *MA*, p. 47.
[243] *HA*, pp. 37–40; see also: *JK*, p. 27; *BS*, p. 17.
[244] Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 129, note 83; E. Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī views on the Ṣaḥāba", *JSAI* 5 (1984), pp. 165–167 (in a more general, Imāmī–Shīʿī context).

Against ʿAlī, who is the *maʿnā*, stands ʿUmar, who is *Iblīs al-Abālisa*.[245] In some sources of the sect, a fourth person is added to the first three caliphs, that of Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. Together, they are called in Nuṣayrī literature "the four abominables" (*al-arbaʿ al-ardhalūn*).[246]

The fact that after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad the Muslim world was ruled by the *marātib al-kufr* throughout its history intensifies the negative view of the material world. The domination by the devil of every aspect of human history increases the need to escape from this world by the path of the *ṣirāṭ*. As long as the *muwaḥḥidūn* stay in the material world, the Nuṣayrīyya will remain under the rule of the *aḍdād*. In addition to the Muslim usurpers, Jābir ibn Yazīd's *Kitāb sharḥ al-sabʿīn* contains a list of people from sixteen different cultures who represent the devil in this world.[247] This pessimism seems to be one of the reasons for the passive attitude of the Nuṣayrīs towards their surroundings and their detachment from regional politics during most of the medieval period.

A Nuṣayrī tradition on the authority of al-Khaṣībī deals with the question of the justice and the suffering of the believers in the material world:

> Al-Jillī said: I asked my master al-Khaṣībī concerning [Jaʿfar] al-Ṣādiq's words: "This world is the paradise of the sinner and the prison of the believer" and he replied: "But also [from another aspect] this world is the paradise of the believer and the hell of the sinner…because gnosis [*maʿrifa*] is heaven…and the sinner [his soul] undergoes transmigration without escape.[248]

To conclude, in Nuṣayrī theology, only mysticism can provide a logical answer to injustice in the world and the domination of evil.

[245] As to the identification of ʿUmar with the devil, see Bar-Asher and Kofsky, ibid., p. 125, note 63; Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Noṣayrīs*, p. 55. For Iranian Shīʿī folklore concerning the identification of ʿUmar with Satan, see H. Enayat, "The Shīʿī position vs other divisions within Islam" in S. H. Nasr, H. Dabashi and S. V. Reza Nasr (eds.), *Shiʾism: Doctrines, Thought and Spirituality* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 73. A celebration of ʿUmar's death in the Nuṣayrī calendar is dealt with below.

[246] In some sources *al-arzalūn*; a phonetic exchange of dh and z is typical of several Arabic dialects; see, for example, *KHA*, p. 213.

[247] *KSS* in *MA*, pp. 40–41.

[248] *ARM*, p. 12.

7.2 *Demonic nicknames*

The first three *rāshidūn* (righteous caliphs), who were considered usurpers in the Shīʿa, and demons in Nuṣayrism, were given pejorative nicknames that replaced their original names. These nicknames were used by all Shīʿīs in the medieval period and appear in Imāmī as well as Ghulāt literature. They expressed contempt and were also used as a means of caution (*taqiyya*).

In the writings of Muḥammad ibn Sinān, the three caliphs are scornfully called "the first", "the second" and "the third" (*al-awwal, al-thānī* and *al-thālith*). Together they represent the negative of the divine triad of ʿAlī-Muḥammad-Salmān. The Umayyad dynasty is called by the general nickname *shayṣabān* after a famous Arabic *jinn*.[249] In the Nuṣayrī writings, Ḥabtar (fox, i.e. crafty) is the nickname of the first caliph, Abū Bakr. Dulām, which is probably an old Iraqi dialectical deformation of *dalām* or *ẓallām* (dark, oppressor) is the nickname of ʿUmar. He is called in Jābir ibn Yazīd's *Kitāb sharḥ al-sabʿīn* by the strange name Sakd or Sakad, which is not to be found in any Arabic dictionary or other sources of the sect. The third caliph, ʿUthmān is named Naʿthal (old fool). Despite their demoniac nature, the Nuṣayrī writings attribute to them human sins and promise them human punishment. The three are given the title "worshipper of idols" and are doomed to burn in hell.[250]

The use of nicknames is a passive means of struggle against the authorities, through cursing and scorning. The passive attitude of the Nuṣayrīs characterizes their religion. Nevertheless, in the period of Ghulāt activity in Kufa in the eighth century until the time of al-Khaṣībī, an important doctrine of mystic activism still subsisted. Nuṣayrī literature preserved it and used it as an ideology of revenge postponed for the Day of Judgment.

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249 *HUA*, pp. 60, 61, repeated by al-Khaṣībī in: *RR*, p. 42.

250 See for example, Ḥabtar in *AAN*, p. 116; *IM*, p. 275; *RR*, p. 52; Dulām in *AAN*, p. 114; *IM*, p. 275; Sakad in *KSS* included in *MA*, p.47, ciphered by al-Ṭabarānī with the gematric numbers 4 20 60 (= s.k.d.); Naʿthal in *KBS*, p. 262. See also their appearance in *DKH*, fol. 17a, 36a, 47b, 51a, 63b, 78b, 111a; *DMA*, fol. 136 a, b, 167a. Compare with the similar pejorative names of the three first caliphs in Imāmī literature, in M. M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shiism* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 115–118. See more details concerning derogatory appellations of the three first caliphs in Imāmī Shīʿīsm in E. Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī views on the Ṣaḥāba", *JSAI* 5 (1984), pp. 162–165.

8. *The "Prince of the Bees": ʿAlī and his army of martyrs*

One of the greatest mysteries of the Nuṣayrī religion is the strange title of ʿAlī, *amīr al-naḥl* (prince or commander of the swarm of bees). Orientalists of the nineteenth century explained that this title is used only by Shīʿīs, particularly the Nuṣayrīs. Lammens pointed out that the source of this title is in the Qurʾān, in the "verse of the bees" interpreted by the Shīʿīs as a symbol of their community.[251] The following verse from the Qurʾān speaks about bees:

> And your Lord inspired the bees, saying: Take for yourself, of the mountains, houses and of the trees and of what they are building. Then eat all the fruits and walk in the path of your Lord made smooth for you and from them [the fruits] will come out a drink [honey] with several colors in which there is healing for men. Surely in that is a sign for the thinking people.
>
> (Qurʾān, al-Nahl [16]: 67–68)

Goldziher explained that the *amīr al-naḥl* is a synonym for the term *yaʿasūb*, and the *naḥl* is a symbol for the family of the Prophet Muḥammad, the *ahl al-bayt*, and their words are like honey. Their enemies are the followers of *yaʿaṣūb al-māl* (queen bee of material things). In his article concerning Dussaud's study of the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, Goldziher notes that in Nuṣayrī theology the bees are exalted to the level of stars and become angels and their *amīr*, ʿAlī, is raised to the level of divinity.[252]

Lyde explains that: "the true believers are like bees, which seek the best flowers".[253] Bar-Asher holds that the Imāmī explanation for "prince of the bees" is that the bees are the Imāms.[254] The explanation of Lyde, that the bees are the believers, is more appropriate for the Nuṣayrī religion.

The analogy of the two titles of ʿAlī, *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *amīr al-naḥl* provides for the same explanation, that the believers (*muʾminīn*)

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[251] H. Lammens, *Islam, Beliefs and Institutions*, trans. Sir E. D. Ross (3rd ed., London: Frank Cass and Co., 1987), p. 153.

[252] I. Goldziher, *Gesammelte Schritten* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970), vol. 5, pp. 213–214. See al-Khaṣībī's use of the term *yaʿasūb* in one of his poems: *DKH*, fol. 54a.

[253] Lyde, *The Asian Mystery*, p. 275. See the same example of the flowers in *TDN*, p. 211–212.

[254] Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shiism*, p. 11, note 99; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 169, note 28.

are the bees (*naḥl*). Indeed, al-Khaṣībī, in his *Hidāya al-kubrā*, explaining the title *amīr al-naḥl*, explicitly identifies the bees with the believers.[255] This was also the opinion of al-Majlisī, who explains that the *naḥl* is a synonym for the Shīʿa. In his chapter concerning *taqiyya* he compares the Shīʿīs and the Sunnīs with the bees and the birds. According to this analogy, the bees keep their honey secret from the birds, which are apparently stronger than them. According to this tradition, the birds are not totally aware of the power of the honey, but even their limited knowledge concerning the secret of the bees is enough to make the birds envy them and to persecute them. In his explanation of the importance of *taqiyya*, al-Majlisī compares the physical merits of honey with the spiritual advantage of knowledge. The honey is the sweetest food and brings health to the body, as does the knowledge that the Imām shares with his community.[256] In the late Nuṣayrī catechism, honey is also identified with knowledge: "The believers were likened to bees because they gather from the flowers their best".[257] Nevertheless, the available explanations do not answer the question why the bees were chosen from all living creatures to represent the believers. Hence, an additional explanation should be proposed.

In a recent work, Ross Shephard Kraemer devotes a chapter to the significance of bees in Eastern cultures. The bees had an important value in Egyptian and Greek religions of antiquity, which is reflected in their mystical role in the anonymous apocryphal work *Joseph and Aseneth*. Kraemer finds Neoplatonic symbols associated with bees based on the writings of the philosopher Porphyry (d. 309), a disciple of Plotinus. It may therefore be assumed that the mystical role of bees became known to Shīʿī mystics through Neoplatonic influence. The bees in *Joseph and Aseneth* surrounded Aseneth, daughter of Potiphar, who converted to monotheism in order to marry Joseph. According to Kraemer, Porphyry considered the bees righteous souls that die and are reborn, live justly, do God's will, and finally return to heaven.[258]

In addition to the logical association of the loyalty of the bees to their queen with the loyalty of believers to God, the second most prominent

[255] *HK*, p. 93.
[256] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 72, pp. 427–428.
[257] *TDN*, pp. 211–212; the translation is from Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrīs-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 186.
[258] R. S. Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 167–172.

characteristic of the bees is their will to sacrifice their life in order to defend the swarm and their queen. In this context, al-Khaṣībī, in his *Dīwān*, describes the bees as *junūd*, armies of God.[259] In Nuṣayrīsm, the bees are the leading believers, mystics who sacrifice their lives to spread the message of the Imām before returning to heaven. Also according to an Imāmī tradition, on the eve of the Karbalā' massacre, Ḥusayn and his followers, who are the main symbols of purity and of self-sacrifice, were reciting a prayer that had "a sound as the sound of bees" (*dawī ka-dawī al-naḥl*).[260]

8.1 *The docetic martyrdom*: nidā, taṣrīḥ *and* khuṭba

The martyrdom of the bees leads to the important doctrine of *nidāʾ* (call, pl. *andiya*,), also called *taṣrīḥ* (declaration). The first term describes the act, which is a synonym for the *adhān*, the call from the minaret. The second term describes the content of this call, a declaration of the divinity of the Imām, which replaces the orthodox call for prayer. By performing the *nidāʾ* and *taṣrīḥ*, the mystic sacrifices his life, because his belief is considered heretical by the authorities and the masses, and he must accept the consequences and be prepared to be punished. His goal is to serve the Imām by spreading his esoterical message. He knows that the Imām will excommunicate him or even demand his execution, but only outwardly, as an act of *taqiyya* (caution).[261] According to this doctrine, the mystic is not really harmed at all. This interesting process of docetic sacrifice, which has not yet been studied, appears in several sources, including the newly available sources of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*. Ivanow alluded to it in his study of the *Umm al-kitāb*, where he noticed that one characteristic of the *muwaḥḥidūn*, the mystic disciples of the Imāms, from the time of ʿAlī to that of al-Bāqir, is their willingness to sacrifice themselves. Their

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[259] *DKH*, fol. 17a, line 8 in the poem *bukhtu bi-sirrī*. The pious daughter of Potiphar is not mentioned in Nuṣayrī sources, but we do find that his wife is denounced in *BS*, p. 17.

[260] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 44, p. 394.

[261] Several scholars, such as Modaressi and Moezzi, share the opinion that the disassociation of the Ghulāt does not necessarily reflect a rejection of their doctrine, but seems more like an act of defending the Shīʿī community from the general accusation of heresy by the Sunnī authorities. See Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, p. 21; M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin dans le Shīʿisme originel* (Paris: Verdier, 1992), pp. 313–315.

religion is defined as *madhhab fidāʾī* (doctrine of sacrifice).[262] The term *fidāʾī* appears also in the late *Urjūza* of Shaykh al-Ṣuwayrī (fourteenth century).[263]

In Nuṣayrī theology, the doctrine of *nidāʾ* and *taṣrīḥ* was developed into a docetic concept. This doctrine is linked to the principle of *siyāqa*. In appearance, the *bāb* declares the divinity of the Imām and sacrifices his life. In reality it is the *ism* that appears in his *bāb*, declares the divinity of the *maʿnā*, and then disappears. The *nidāʾ* is a repetition of the act of Muḥammad when he declared the divinity of ʿAlī on a wooden podium in Ghadīr Khumm, as described in al-Khaṣībī's *Qasīda al-ghadīriyya*:

> The day of Ghadīr is a day of joy/
> God clarified in it the grace of Ghadīr
> And granted Khumm the glories and merit /
> And the treasures in the happiness
> And the most excellent and great numbers of pleasures /
> [Granted] as a honor comprising [or exceeding][264] all praises
> The day when Muḥammad called [*nādā*] to all the creatures /
> When he said in a clear speech
> Declaring to all above a wooden stage /
> Disposed according to His decreed command:
> "Indeed, this is your creator therefore know him! /
> This is the former of the forms
> Indeed, this is your God therefore grasp him!/
> he is the subject of your worship for ever
> Indeed, this is your Lord therefore worship him only! /
> He is [too] exalted to have any comparison or parallel.[265]

The content of the *nidāʾ* is explained in al-Khaṣībī's poem by a combination of citations from the Qurʾān in which Muḥammad calls upon the believers to know God and make a declaration of God's virtues. Most of the texts that deal with this subject in Nuṣayrī sources cite al-Khaṣībī. Hence it may be assumed that he was the first leader of the

[262] W. Ivanow, "Notes sur l'Ummu'l-Kitab des ismaéliens de l'Asie centrale", *REI* 7 (1932), pp. 439–440; Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī 'l-Islām*, pp. 97–98.

[263] *SUR*, fol. 218b.

[264] The difference in the two versions of the *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī*: in Ms. Manchester *yaḥūzu* (comprising), in Ms. Damascus *yajūzu* (exceeding). See S. Ḥabib, *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī maʿa sharḥ li-'l-rumūz al-bāṭiniyya al-wārida fīhi: dirāsa wa-taḥqīq wa-sharḥ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-'l-Maṭbūʿāt, 2001), p. 31. Ḥabib's version seems to be the correct one in this case, based on the citation of this line in *MA*, p. 56; however, this version suffers from imprecisions and the omission of lines from the poem.

[265] *DKH*, fol. 9a. Compare with the almost identical version in *MA*, p. 56.

sect to teach the doctrine of *nidāʾ* to his disciples. The declaration of God's divinity is in fact a list of his virtues, which can be found in what can be defined as the *khuṭba* literature of the Ghulāt. This literature is an anonymous collection of sermons written in the first person in which ʿAlī declares his divinity. Because of their esoteric nature these sermons were not included in the canonic *Nahj al-balāgha*. According to al-Jillī's *Risālat al-andiya*, which is the most important document concerning the issue of *nidāʾ*, the declaration of the Imāms' divinity is in fact a citation of a *khuṭba*. In other words, when the mystic was performing the *nidāʾ* he used to quote these sermons.[266]

In *Risālat al-andiya*, al-Jillī mentions the following sermons: *Khuṭbat al-aqālīm* (sermon of the regions), *Khuṭbat al-bayān* (sermon of the clarification), *Khuṭbat al-kashf* (sermon of the revelation), *Khuṭbat al-ṭathanjiyya/tuthunjiyya* (sermon of the Gulf).[267] To this list al-Ṭabarānī adds two additional speeches: *Khuṭbat al-durra* (sermon of the pearl) and *Khuṭbat al-fāḥiṣa* (sermon of the examining one).[268] Fragments of some of these speeches are found in Ms. Kiel 19 and some were preserved in Imāmī and Bahā'ī sources.[269] The anonymous compiler in Ms. Kiel 19 defined these speeches as *iʿlān* (call, a synonym of *nidāʾ*) and *taṣrīḥ*, which confirms the link between the doctrine of *nidāʾ* and the *khuṭba* literature.[270]

The *Qasīda al-ghadīriyya* indicates that al-Khaṣībī was well acquainted with the *Khuṭba* literature. Thus, the possibility should not be excluded that al-Khaṣībī's declaration of his mystic beliefs in Baghdad, which caused his imprisonment, was in fact an act of *nidāʾ*. Al-Khaṣībī could still claim to be speaking in the name of the Imām, who was still in a state of *ghayba ṣughrā* (lesser occultation) between

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266 *RR*, p. 73; *FRR*, p. 110; *KHA*, p. 168; *KBS*, p. 233; *RA*, pp. 328–332, *RZB*, p. 17.

267 *RA*, pp. 330–331.

268 *RZB*, p. 17.

269 See in *KHC* fragments from *Khuṭbat al-bayān*, fol. 1b–2b, 6a; *Khuṭbat al-ṭathanjiyya/al-ṭuthunjiyya* called here *al-ṭaṭanjiyya/al-ṭuṭunjiyya*, fol. 2b–6a; *Khuṭbat al-kashf* called here *Khuṭbat al-kāshifa*, fol. 7a. An additional speech, not found in medieval sources of the sect, called *Khuṭbat al-jawhar* is cited in fol. 7b. Some information concerning the *Khuṭbat al-kashf* can be found in *HAIH*, pp. 248–249. Concerning the existence of three of these sermons in more complete forms in other Shīʿī sources, see M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète: croyances et pratiques spirituelles dans l'islam shiʾite* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006), pp. 101–103. Concerning the significance of the *ṭuṭunjiyya* in Bahāʾī religion, see D. MacEoin, *Ritual in Babism and Bahaʾism* (London: British Academy Press, 1994), pp. 150–152, 153 notes 15, 16.

270 *KHC*, fol. 2a.

260/874 and 329/941. However, since al-Khaṣībī was neither excommunicated nor liquidated, his followers did not view him as a martyr. Moreover, although he was sanctified as one of the *ahl al-marātib al-sufliyya*, his disciples did not consider him as a personification of the *bāb*. Hence, al-Khaṣībī could not be seen as one of the "bees of God". Indeed, the doctrine of *nidāʾ* became a theoretical idea rather than a practical obligation after the time of al-Khaṣībī, who promoted the obligation of *taqiyya* as a means of survival.

In the *Risālat al-andiya* al-Jillī presents a crystallized doctrine of *nidāʾ*, *taṣrīḥ* and *khuṭba*. According to this doctrine, all the major mystics (or Ghulāt) who are considered *bāb*s in Nuṣayrī religion performed the *nidāʾ*. The persons mentioned in the Nuṣayrī sources are as follows: the first was Muḥammad, the *ism* who appeared in his *bāb* Salmān and declared the divinity of ʿAlī, a declaration called *nidāʾ yawm al-ghadīr*. This was then repeated by ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ[271] who declared the divinity of ʿAlī. The latter's reaction was to order Ibn Sabaʿs execution. Other mystics were only cursed or excommunicated by the Imām. Such was the case of Jābir al-Juʿfī and Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh, who declared the divinity of the Imām al-Bāqir, and later ʿUmar ibn al-Furāt and Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr, who declared the divinity of ʿAlī al-Riḍā and his son Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī.[272] The most important, and probably the most famous, of these examples is Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb, who became a martyr as a result of his *nidāʾ*. His activity was not regarded by Sunnīs as important at all. Historians such as Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) did not even bother to mention him. It is only within Shīʿī society that he had any significant influence.

According to Nuṣayrī sources, Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb Muḥammad ibn Abī Zaynab mounted the minaret of the mosque of Kufa, and performed the *nidāʾ*. His declaration of the Imām Jaʿfar's divinity, which was performed as an *adhān* (call for prayer) from the top of the minaret, is defined in Nuṣayrī theology as "a testimony of the unification of God" (*shahāda bi-tawḥīd Allāh*).[273] The Nuṣayrī account is backed by Imāmī sources. Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb's revolt together with his seventy

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[271] According to the *Umm al-kitāb*, Ibn Sabaʾ declared the divinity of al-Bāqir, the fifth Imām, after the latter had revealed to him the secret meaning of the letters and then appeared to him in the forms of Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, explaining to him in each form that it was a divine appearance; see Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 92–96.

[272] *KBS*, pp. 232–233; *DMA*, fol. 211a–212a.

[273] *KBS*, p. 232; *AAN*, pp. 125–126; *RR*, p. 73, *RA*, p. 323.

partisans caused a riot in Kufa and ended with his brutal execution by the ʿAbbāsid authorities. According to al-Nawbakhtī, the disciples of Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb developed a docetic belief concerning their master's death. The gap between the historical events and this belief is striking. The ʿAbbāsid governor executed Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb on the banks of the Euphrates and crucified him with some of his partisans in Kufa. Their heads were cut off and sent to Caliph al-Manṣūr in Baghdad, who ordered that they be hung for three days at the entrance of the city. Then their heads and bodies were burned. These terrible events did not prevent his adherents from developing a docetic belief that Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb and his followers were not harmed at all. According to this belief of the Khaṭṭābiyya, the Imām encouraged the ʿAbbāsid warriors to attack the mosque of Kufa during the night, and made some of them wear the form of Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb and his partisans. In the morning, when the fight was over, the warriors discovered that they had been killing each other, while the rebels disappeared. Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb and his disciples turned into angels.[274]

The connection between the doctrine of *nidāʾ* and *taṣrīḥ* and the *khuṭba* literature as presented in the sources of the sect not only reveals an important aspect of the Nuṣayrī religion; it also sheds new light on the role of these mystical sermons and enables us to understand the role they played in the activity of the Ghulāt.

So far, the theoretical aspects of the Nuṣayrī religion, which are the main issues in the study of the sect's mystics, have been dealt with. The rest of this chapter covers the doctrines that have a practical aspect and are connected with the liturgy and cults, beginning with an explanation of the Nuṣayrī interpretation of the obligations of Islam.

9. *Allegorical interpretation of the* sharīʿa

The study of the Nuṣayrī version of Islamic law, the *sharīʿa*, is of importance for understanding the sect's identity as well as the practical dimension of their religion. Although the law is based on a *taʾwīl*, an allegorical interpretation, which gives every obligation an esoteric meaning (*bāṭin*),[275] several Nuṣayrī sources repeat the warning of the

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[274] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, pp. 70–71.

[275] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Noṣayrīs*, pp. 47–48. Al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī uses the term *taʾwīl* to define his interpretation of the Qurʾān; see *DMS*, p. 230.

Imām Jaʿfar that neglecting the practical observance of the regular, outward (*ẓāhir*) obligations may lead to the sin of *ibāḥa* (antinomianism).[276] The Nuṣayrī religion demands both *ʿilm* (knowledge) and *ʿamal* (work, meaning practical performance of the obligations). According to a Nuṣayrī saying, "*ʿilm* without *ʿamal* is like a traveler who sails in a boat without a sailor" (*ka-ʾl-fulk allatī yarkabuhā ʾl-rākib bilā mallāḥ*).[277] However, the mystical aspect of the religion is regarded as much more valuable than the overt aspect. According to Nuṣayrī sources, the Imām al-Bāqir said that esoteric knowledge (*ʿilm/maʿrifa*) is much more important than the cult (*ʿibāda*),[278] and that the knowledge of one mystic (*ʿārif*, pl. *ʿārifūn*) is worth more than the cult of 70,000 worshippers (*ʿibād*, sing. *ʿābid*).[279] It seems that al-Khaṣībī was the main figure in the creation of Nuṣayrī law, since he is called in one source of the sect *ṣāḥib al-sharīʿa* (owner of the law).[280] In the following discussion, the Nuṣayrī interpretation of the *sharīʿa* is studied in comparison with the two orthodox versions of Islamic law in Sunnism and in Shīʿism, which in practice are very similar to each other.

9.1 *The pillars of islam*: shahāda, ṣalāt, ṣawm, zakāt *and* ḥajj

The *arkān al-Islām*, the five pillars of Islam, are the fundamental obligations of all Muslims.

9.1.1 Shahāda (*declaration of faith*)

The *shahāda* is the Muslim declaration of belief in one God and the acknowledgment of Muḥammad as his Prophet, to which the Shīʿīs add loyalty (*walāya*) to ʿAlī. In Nuṣayrīsm, the *shahāda* is given a mystical interpretation, since its first part (*lā ilāha illā ʾllāh*) contains twelve letters corresponding to the number of Imāms.[281] Every

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[276] See, for example, *DKH*, fol. 22a; *IM*, p. 257; *HAD*, pp. 110, 146, 170; *TU*, p. 316; *ARM*, p. 10; *HUA*, p. 51 (Mufaḍḍal asks in his testament that the *ẓāhir* not be neglected). Makzūn al-Sinjārī explained the importance of following the obligations of Islam along with the study of mysticism. See *RTN*, pp. 279–282, 293.

[277] *AAM*, p. 263.

[278] *KHA*, p. 199.

[279] *HAD*, p. 123.

[280] *RIA*, 294.

[281] *MN*, fol. 129a. See also *ARM*, pp. 16–17, where it is explained that the second part of the *shahāda* also contains 12 letters in Arabic: *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* (messenger of God). Other names of Shīʿī saints contain 12 letters in Arabic, for example: Fāṭima bint Muḥammad and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

Shīʿī believer must declare: "There is no other God but Allāh, his Prophet is Muḥammad and ʿAlī is his beloved one" (*lā ilāha illā ʾllāh wa-Muḥammad rasūl Allāh wa-ʿAlī walī Allāh*).[282] But since ʿAlī and Muḥammad are personifications of the deity, the Nuṣayrīs replace this declaration by their own *shahāda*: "There is no God but ʿAlī" (*lā ilāha illā ʿAlī*),[283] or "the prince of the bees, there is no other God but him" (*amīr al-naḥl lā ilāha illā huwa*).[284] According to a Nuṣayrī tradition, when ʿAlī was a baby he said: "There is no God but me" (*lā ilāha illā anā*).[285] However, it should be stressed here again, in order to prevent a widespread error, that the Nuṣayrī ʿAlī is not the person known to us from Muslim history, nor is he a human being in whom the divinity was incarnated, as described in other Ghulāt texts or in hostile heresiography. The misunderstanding of this doctrine has led throughout the sect's history to accusations of heresy that have had severe consequences. For the Nuṣayrīs, ʿAlī was not a human being but a human form through which God contacted humanity in a docetic appearance. Hence, the accusations that the Nuṣayrīs worship the human person of ʿAlī derive from a superficial understanding of the sect's belief. Al-Khaṣībī explained, based on the teaching of Ibn Nuṣayr, that "the form of God is not God himself" (*mithāl Allāh ghayr Allāh*).[286] Al-Jillī also dealt with the expression "God is ʿAlī" with much caution, even concerning the worship of the form of God. In his *Ḥāwī ʾl-asrār*, he cites Muḥammad ibn Sinān's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, explaining that ʿAlī is a form through which the believers can grasp God, but he is not God himself: "The one who declares that the human appearance of ʿAlī is God, is a heretic". When God said in his *Khuṭba*: "I am the exoteric and the esoteric" (*anā ʾl- ẓāhir wa-anā ʾl-bāṭin*), says Ibn Sinān, "He meant that his exoteric appearance is a test [of belief] to

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[282] This triple formula, which appears in medieval sources, is attributed to the eighth Imām, ʿAlī al-Riḍā; see, for example, M. M. Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shiʾite Identity in Early Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 273, note 43; J. E. Eliash, "On the genesis and development of the Twelver-Shīʿī three-tenet shahāda", in G. R. Hawting (ed.), *The Development of Islamic Ritual* (London: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 23–30. However, it became an official part of the Imāmī doctrine only in the Safavid period. See Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shiism*, p. 198 and his bibliography concerning this issue in note 321.

[283] *AAN*, pp. 114–115.

[284] *RB*, p. 274.

[285] *JK*, p. 37.

[286] *RR*, p. 58.

them [to humanity] and is not his appearance in reality [but only in a docetic way]".[287]

A more complete formula of the Nuṣayrī declaration of faith is found in later sources. According to an anonymous *istiftāʾ* (request for a *fatwā*) sent in the fourteenth century from Syria to the well-known Sunnī authority Ibn Taymiyya, the Nuṣayrīs are said to use a triple formula of the *shahāda*:

> I testify that there is no other God but ʿAlī the transcendent the esoteric, and there is no veil but Muḥammad the righteous the faithful, and there is no path to him but Salmān the powerful.[288]

Such a detailed triple formula is not found in any of the medieval Nuṣayrī sources, but there is a similar version in the nineteenth-century *Bākūra al-Sulaymāniyya*.[289] The fact that this formula does not appear in the sect's literature but only in external (not Nuṣayrī) or late sources may indicate that it was used orally and not read from religious books, as were the other formulas of the *shahāda* found in their writings. Indeed, according to Sunnī sources, the triple formula was declared by the members of the sect during their uprising in Jabala in 717/1317, headed by a Nuṣayrī *mahdī* and not by their religious shaykhs.

Bar-Asher and Kofsky allude to an additional *shahāda*, which is declared only by the mystic who reaches such an exalted degree of ascent of the soul that he feels unification with the deity itself: "I testify that You are my goal and You are my *maʿnā*…and You are I and I am You".[290] Such a declaration of unification, which is rare in Nuṣayrī religion and even considered heretical by Makzūn al-Sinjārī, and appears only in the twelfth-century *Munāẓarat al-Nashshābī*, is more typical of Ṣūfī mysticism. The most famous example is the declaration of the mystic Ḥallāj who claimed to achieve the divine degree of spirituality and declared "I am truth". The mystic's *shahāda* of unification is an example of the similarity between Ṣūfism and Nuṣayrīsm, undoubtedly an important subject for further study.

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[287] *KHA*, pp. 167–169.

[288] See Y. Friedman, "Ibn Taymiyya's *fatāwā* against the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī sect" *Der Islam*, 82/2 (2005), pp. 357–358 and note 34. Ibn Taymiyya's juridic decision is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

[289] Ibid., p. 358, note 34; *BS*, pp. 14, 26.

[290] Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 27, 84.

Another use of the term *shahāda* is found in Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba's *Kitāb al-uṣayfir*. According to this source, the *shahāda* (meaning in Arabic "declaration of belief" but also "to be present in a place") is the peak of the mystic's path. It is a spiritual presence in the world of light in which the mystic sees the *bāb* with his own eyes (*muʿāyin*). This situation is seen as complete freedom from the material prison and the ultimate happiness.[291]

9.1.2 Ṣalāt *(prayer)*

Islamic law demands five prayers a day. The Nuṣayrīs claim that the day always begins at noon, thus the noon prayer is the first one, and not that of the dawn. Every prayer includes a number of *rakaʿāt* (sing. *rakʿa*), which are units of recitation from the Qurʾān, accompanied by bowing and prostration. Altogether they form 17 *rakaʿāt* per day, another example of the mystical significance of this number. According to Nuṣayrī belief, every prayer represents a saint (*shakhṣ*, pl. *ashkhāṣ*), who is a personification of one of God's aspects.[292] This is the order of the prayers and their *ashkhās* according to old Ghulat tradition and later Nuṣayrī tradition:

obligatory prayers	*rakaʿāt*[293]	*ashkhās* in the older tradition[294]	*ashkhās* in the later tradition[295]
al- ẓuhr (noon)	4	*maʿnā*	Muḥammad
al-ʿasr (afternoon)	4	*ism/hijāb*	Fāṭir (the masculine appellation of Fāṭima)
al-maghrib/al-wusṭā (sunset/middle prayer)	3	Imām Jaʿfar (=*al-jīm*)	Ḥasan
al-ʿishāʾ/al-ʿatama (dusk/evening)	4	Ḥasan (=*al-ḥāʾ al-awwal*)	Ḥusayn
al-fajr (dawn)	2	Ḥusayn	Muḥsin

[291] *US*, fol. 8a–9a.
[292] *KBS*, p. 220; *DMA*, pp. 177a–180a; *BS*, pp. 12–13.
[293] *TU*, p. 252.
[294] According to *HUA*, pp. 34–35.
[295] According to *HAD*, p. 108.

The logic of the order of the prayer is based on the role of each of the *ashkhāṣ*. For example, the reason the Nuṣayrīs consider the *maghrib* to be the middle prayer, is based on the fact that the *shakhṣ* of this prayer is Jaʿfar, who was the sixth leader of the Shīʿa, i.e. the middle of the twelve Imāms.[296] In a later tradition, based on the same logic, it is the middle prayer because it symbolizes Ḥasan who is the third of the five persons of the *ism*.[297] According to some sources, the prayer itself, the *ṣalāt*, is identified with Muḥammad and represents the recognition of ʿAlī's true nature.[298]

The main source for understanding the mystical meaning of the prayers is al-Jillī's *Bāṭin al-ṣalāt* (the inner meaning of prayer). Al-Jillī explains that the five prayers represent five appearances of the *maʿnā* and his *ism* in three cycles of times which followed the *yawm al-aẓilla*: the cycle of Abraham (*al-qubba al-Ibrāhīmiyya*), the cycle of Moses (*al-qubba al-Mūsāwiyya*) and what he calls "the actual cycle of Muḥammad" (*hādhihi 'l-qubba al-Muḥammadiyya*). Every prayer represents the five appearances of the *ism* following those of the *maʿnā*: the *ashkhāṣ al-ṣalāt* (saints of the prayers).[299] As shown in the table, ʿAlī is represented in the *ẓuhr* prayer in the old tradition, which is taken from Ibn Sinān's *Kitāb al-ḥujub wa-'l-anwār*. In the later tradition, which is that of al-Jillī, all the prayers represent the personifications of the *ism*. ʿAlī is not represented in a prayer; rather he is the prayer itself.

In *Bāṭin al-ṣalāt*, al-Jillī gives interesting explanations for the names of the prayers. The first is called *ẓuhr*, from the root ẓ.h.r. (to appear) because it represents Muḥammad, the first appearance of the *ism*. The second prayer, the *ʿaṣr*, represents Fāṭir. This masculine appellation of Fāṭima derives from the Nuṣayrī resentment of the feminine element. Her name is Fāṭir because she was created (*infaṭarat*) from the *ism*. According to exoteric Imāmī Shīʿism, Fāṭima was the best of Muḥammad's children, and according to esoteric Nuṣayrism, Fāṭir is the *jawharat al-mīm* (the pearl or the best of the essence of the *ism*). There is no call for prayer (*adhān*) for the *ʿaṣr* prayer to express the idea that there is no separation between the *ism* and Fāṭir. Al-Jillī explains that the feminine nature of Fāṭir is only in appearance, in

296 *HUA*, p. 34.
297 *KBS*, pp. 230–231.
298 *HAD*, pp. 108, 110; *KBS*, pp. 236–237.
299 *KBS*, pp. 223–224.

order to provide the illusion of giving birth to the three holy *ḥāʾāt* (three times the letter *ḥ*), Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and Muḥsin. The third prayer, the *maghrib*, is from the root gh.r.b. (to disappear) because it represents the vanished Imām Ḥasan. The fourth prayer is called *ʿishāʾ* (evening) and *ʿatama* (darkness), to symbolize the Docetism of Ḥusayn, when the infidels were in the dark and were not able to see the truth. In addition, *ʿatama* is one of the names of the devil, such as Dulām, which is also the nickname of ʿUmar who is in a state of darkness. The last and fifth of the obligatory (*farḍ*) prayers is *al-fajr* (dawn). It is the last because it symbolizes the fact that Muḥsin was the last of the *ḥāʾāt.*[300]

Al-Jillī gives a symbolic meaning for every prayer and for every movement during its performance. For example, the prayer of Friday, the *jumʿa*, is of special importance because it symbolizes the Judgment Day. This explanation is based on the meaning of *jumʿa* (assembly), because not only will all humanity be assembled at the judgment, but the *ism* will also be united with his *bāb* and thus the esoteric and exoteric will be one. This also explains why Friday is called "the day of the appearance [of the divinity] and of the revealing" (*yawm al-ẓuhūr wa-'l-kashf*).[301]

The obligation to wash before prayer, the *wuḍūʾ*, is explained as symbolizing the knowledge flowing from the *ism* to the *bāb*, and purification is achieved by the study of the *tawḥīd* and the cleansing that it provides from the impurity of the enemies of the Shīʿa.[302] The purification of the hands with sand when water is not available, the *tayammum*, symbolizes the situation of the Nuṣayrīs after the death of Ibn Nuṣayr, in which the *muwaḥḥidūn* studied with mystic leaders in the absence of the *bāb*s.[303] The *ḍuḥā*, the forenoon prayer, which is an optional (*nāfila*, pl. *nawāfil*) prayer in orthodox Islam, is forbidden

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[300] Ibid., pp. 223–230. Another explanation for the name Fāṭir is the translation of the name "creator", a result of her important role of creation in the chain of emanation; see *MA*, p. 170; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 145. However, the reason for this appellation may also be the need for a gematric value equal to Fāṭima's previous personification: Maryam (Mary, mother of Jesus): F=80+A=1+Ṭ=9+R=200 and M=40+R=200+Y=10+M=40; both equal 290. See L. Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj: Mystic and Martyr in Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), vol. 1 p. 203.

[301] Ibid., pp. 251–252.

[302] Ibid., pp. 259–262. According to a Nuṣayrī source, the members of the Isḥāqiyya performed the *wuḍūʾ* after prayer; see *HIF*, pp. 73–74.

[303] Ibid., p. 266.

in Nuṣayrism because it is considered an invention of the notorious Caliph ʿUmar.[304]

While al-Jillī deals with the meaning of the prayers, his disciple al-Ṭabarānī adds important explanations as to the movements of the body during prayer. In his *Ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā* he discusses the prayer of the mystic in the context of the initiation. General instructions for prayer appear in his *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*. The liturgical units include a *khuṭba* (sermon) or a *duʿāʾ* (prayer), and are sometimes followed by a *ziyāra* (literally, pilgrimage to a holy tomb). Al-Ṭabarānī gives instructions concerning the units of prayers (though he never uses the term *rakʿa*), which include prostration and the raising of the hands and face towards the sky.[305] In some cases he permits adding personal requests at the end of a prayer.

An allegorical interpretation of the term *qibla* (direction of prayer) is known from some important Ṣūfī orders. While in orthodox Islam the *qibla* is the direction of prayer towards the Black Stone of the Kaʿba in Mecca, in Ṣūfism it is replaced by a human *qibla*. The Ṣūfī *qibla* is a spiritual leader from whom the believers ask for guidance.[306] In Nuṣayrī theology the sacred object of the prayer has an allegorical meaning. The Kaʿba is a symbol of Muḥammad who is the *ism*. Mecca, which is called Umm al-Qurā (the mother of the villages), represents Fāṭir (Fāṭima). From her essence were created the *qurā*, which is personified by the three *ḥāʾāt*.[307] Thus, the term *qibla* turns from a

[304] Ibid., p. 270. The *ḍuḥā* prayer was a subject of controversy among Muslim medieval scholars. Most of them agreed that the Prophet Muḥammad did not perform this prayer regularly and some claimed that he never performed it at all. The Shīʿī resentment against this prayer may be explained by the fact that it was recommended mainly by ʿĀʾisha, the beloved wife of the Prophet, who was in conflict with ʿAlī. Concerning this controversy, see U. Rubin, "Morning and evening prayers in early Islam", in G. R. Hawting (ed.), *The Development of Islamic Ritual*, pp. 110–114. It is interesting to compare this Nuṣayrī prohibition of the *ḍuḥā* prayer with the similar prohibition during the caliphate of the Fāṭimid al-Ḥākim (disappeared in 412/1021); see D. L. O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co./New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1923), p. 141; N. Dana, *The Druzes in the Middle East* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), pp. 42, 191 note 18.

[305] See, for example, the beginning of each prayer, in *MA*, pp. 122–124.

[306] See, for example, on the terminology of the Naqshbandiyya order, A. F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), p. 155. See also the biography of the eleventh-century Persian Shaykh Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Qaṣṣāb, in A. G. Ravan Farhadi, *ʿAbdullāh Anṣārī of Herāt (1006–1089): An Early Ṣūfī Master* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), p. 52.

[307] *KBS*, pp. 338–243, 262.

practical obligation into a spiritual concept. The believer does not turn in his prayer towards the object of sanctity, but addresses his prayer towards what it represents. Since the Imāms are personifications of the *ism*, they become the *qibla*. Such identification of the Imām with the *qibla* can be found among other mystic Shīʿīs as well. For example, Amir-Moezzi notes that the eighth Imām, ʿAlī al-Riḍā, was called "the seventh *qibla*" a nickname used by the Persian theologian Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) and later on in the writings of the nineteenth-century Dhahabiyya Shīʿī–Ṣūfī order.[308] The Nuṣayrī interpretation of the *qibla* is related to the general concept of the mystical Kaʿba. Since the mystical Kaʿba is not a perceptible object, the pilgrimage also becomes a spiritual path. These issues are explained in the examination of the *ḥajj*.

9.1.3 Ṣawm *(fast of Ramaḍān)*

The *ṣawm*, the fasting during the holy month of Ramaḍān, appears in the Qurʾān (al-Baqara [2]: 183) and is obligatory for all Muslims. They are prohibited from eating and drinking in the daytime during this month as an act of purity of the soul and devotion to God, since the first parts of the Qurʾān are believed to have been revealed during this month. Nuṣayrī sources do not abolish the duty of fasting, but add to it the prohibition of talking, which is the mystical meaning of the fast. Al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba explains in his *Ḥaqāʿiq asrār al-dīn*, that the fast of Ramaḍān represents the silence of ʿAbdallāh, father of the Prophet Muḥammad, during that month.[309] We find the same explanation in al-Ṭabarānī's *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, with the addition of the silence of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist and of Mary, mother of Jesus (Qurʾān, Maryam [19]: 26).[310] Al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba explains the reason for this silence. These persons were aware of the sanctity of their children and kept silence instead of announcing it (*tark al-idhāʿa*, refraining from anouncement) in order to protect them. This fast of speech is an example of the *taqiyya*, the obligation to keep the religion secret. Thus, the breaking of the fast represents the abolition of the *taqiyya* (*isqāṭ al-taqiyya*) and also the open discourse of the *bāb* to the

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[308] Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète: croyances et pratiques spirituelles dans l'islam shiʾite*, pp. 261–262, 292.
[309] *HAD*, p. 177.
[310] Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 114–117.

believers.[311] In Ismāʿīlī writings, the silence in Ramaḍān also symbolizes the obligation to keep silence concerning the *bāṭin*.[312]

9.1.4 Zakāt *(alms giving)*

Islamic law obliges every Muslim to pay *zakāt*, also called *ṣadaqa*, a small part (or tithe) of their wealth, in order to help poor people or to support financially weak sections of society. This payment is valued in accordance with a person's wealth. Shīʿī law divides the charity into two kinds of payments, the *zakāt* for the community and the *khums* (fifth) for the Imām or his representatives after the *ghayba*.[313] Since the Nuṣayrī community was a poor one for most of its history, it can be assumed that the collection of such a tax was difficult. It is also unlikely that the leaders of the sect would impose heavy alms if they intended to spread Nuṣayrīsm among the peasants in the rural territories of Syria. Indeed, the obligation of the *zakāt* is interpreted in Nuṣayrī doctrine as a spiritual gift, rather than a material one. In his *Ḥaqāʿiq asrār al-dīn*, al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba explains that the *zakāt* and the *khums* are the transmissions of esoteric knowledge from the mystic, who is rich in knowledge, to his disciples who are poor in knowledge.[314] Thus, the transmission of the mystic knowledge, the *ʿilm al-tawḥīd*, is one of the major obligations of the Nuṣayrī mystic. Nevertheless, the sect's sources do not exempt the believers from giving charity. The Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, followed by Isḥāq al-Aḥmar, both state that it is obligatory to offer the *ẓāhir* as well as the *bāṭin* of the *zakāt*.[315] In *Risālat al-bayān*, al-Jillī explains that although the *ẓāhir*, the material aspect of the *ṣadaqa*, is also obligatory,[316] a leader who collects it by force becomes controlled by the devil as a result of his material greed. In this connection, al-Jillī discusses the problematic appointment of Salmān al-Fārisī as governor of Madāʾin (Ctesifon) by Sakad (or Sakd, nickname of Caliph ʿUmar). Al-Jillī explains that ʿAlī

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311 *HAD*, p. 177.

312 See, for example, D. Steigerwald, "Twelver Shīʿī *taʾwīl*", in A. Rippin (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾān* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 390.

313 See N. Calder, "Zakat in Imami Shiʾi jurisprudence, from the tenth to the sixteenth century AD", *BSOAS* 44/3 (1981), pp. 468–480; A. A. Sachedina, "Al-Khums: The fifth in the Imāmī Shiʾi legal system", *JNES* 39 (1980), pp. 276–289.

314 *HAD*, pp. 108, 170–173. See also in *DM*, p. 116; *AAM*, p. 263.

315 *HAD*, pp. 170–173. Citations from Isḥāq al-Aḥmar in Nuṣayrī literature are dealt with in Chapter 1.

316 *RB*, p. 282.

approved this appointment because it is recommended to take money from the sinner and to offer it to the believers. According to al-Jillī, Salmān did not transmit any money to the caliph and spent all his revenues on the poor and the believers. This is considered a *maʿrūf* (good act), which is equal to charity, according to the Islamic concept that "every good act is a charity" (*kull maʿrūf ṣadaqa*).[317] It is quite possible that al-Jillī stresses this subject as result of the historical circumstances of the sect. According to his principles, the financing of the sect by the Banū 'l-Furāt and later by the Ḥamdānids could have been considered by the leaders of the sect an act of *maʿrūf* and *ṣadaqa*.

9.1.5 Ḥajj *(pilgrimage)*

The obligation of the *ḥajj*, the duty of Muslims to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during their lifetime during the four holy months, is given an allegorical interpretation as are the rest of the *arkān al-Islām*. Al-Khaṣībī explained that the *ḥajj* is a personal process, when a person progresses in knowledge and passes through three stages: he moves (*sālik*) from the *taqṣīr*, a state in which he has no esoteric knowledge at all, to that of *tafwīḍ*, when he believes that God has delegated (*fawwaḍa*) his powers to the Imāms and their *bāb*s, and finally he reaches the state of *tawḥīd*, when he understands the esoteric knowledge.[318]

Most of the mystical interpretations of the *ḥajj* in Nuṣayrī theology identify the objects of worship as *ashkhāṣ* (saints). In *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn*, al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba cites the Imām Jaʿfar saying:

> The house to which God ordered the pilgrimage to be performed is Muḥammad and the *bāb* Salmān, which is the axis [of the Kaʿba], as well as the two *yatīm*s Miqdād and Abū Dharr.[319]

Al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba continues to explain that the obligation of the *jamra*, the ritual of throwing of the stones at the devil in the pilgrimage,

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[317] This concept can be found in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*; see, for example, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Munīriyya, 1928), vol. 8, p. 20 (transmitted by Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh) and vol. 31, pp. 25, 29. See also a discussion concerning the modest style of Salmān as governor of Madāʾin, as opposed to other governors, in S. H. Alatas, "The problem of corruption", in K. S. Sandhu, P. Wheatley, H. Alatas (eds.), *Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore* (Malaya, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), pp. 998–999.

[318] *FRR*, p. 114.

[319] *HAD*, p. 173.

should be replaced by a symbolic cursing of Dulām repeated every year.[320] In his book, he considers the *ḥajj* in its *ẓāhir* (outward) meaning as a serious sin, as idol worship. The Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā is cited as saying during his visit to the Kaʿba:

> There is no idol left for the devil on earth to worship instead of God, except this house.[321]

The *ḥajj* is also condemned in al-Adhanī's *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, in the fourth chapter, called *al-Bayt al-maʿmūr* (the house which is the object of pilgrimage). Al-Adhanī adds an explanation to this chapter that the Imām Jaʿfar saw the *ḥajj* as the worship of a stone and that Ibn Nuṣayr denounced it.[322] Al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba cites the following tradition, which illustrates the meaning of the *ḥajj* in Nuṣayrī doctrine:

> A man came to the house of the commander of the believers [*amīr al-muʾminīn*, i.e. ʿAlī] and said he wanted to perform the *ḥajj* and he [ʿAlī] replied: I am the *ḥajj*; everyone who performs the pilgrimage to me is saved and rescued.[323]

This identification of the Imām with the *ḥajj* was mentioned before, in connection with the *qibla*. The physical Kaʿba is replaced by a mystical Kaʿba. Another tradition explains that the mystic who reaches the inner knowledge of the seven *maqāmāt* (sing. *maqām*, station in the mystic path), which are personified by the seven main prophets in Islam (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad) and the *mahdī*, has thereby performed the *ṭawāf*, the ritual of seven circumambulations of the Kaʿba.[324] The term *maqāmāt*, as well as the identification of the spiritual stations with the seven prophets can be found in Ṣūfī doctrine.[325]

In Nuṣayrī writings every part of the holy "house of God", the Kaʿba, represents an aspect of the divinity and its personification. Nevertheless, the traditions concerning the role of each person are not

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320 Ibid.

321 *HAD*, pp. 174–175.

322 *BS*, pp. 30–32. Al-Adhanī uses a wrong example to demonstrate the condemnation of the *ḥajj*. He cites Ibn Nuṣayr's attack against the *ziyāra* in Medina to the tomb of the Prophet Muḥammad instead of the pilgrimage to Mecca. He condemns the consideration of Muḥammad, the personification of the *ism*, as dead. See *BS*, p. 31; *MA*, p. 159.

323 *HAD*, p. 175.

324 *HAD*, p. 174.

325 S. H. Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (Albany, N.Y.: State of New York Press, 1973), pp. 76–77.

uniform. The Shīʿī term *al-arkān al-arbaʿ* (the four pillars) for the people most loyal to ʿAlī gains a mystical dimension. The four pillars of the Kaʿba and the Black Stone are represented by Salmān, Abū Dharr, Miqdād and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir (Miqdād is a pillar as well as the Black Stone). According to another tradition, cited from Isḥāq al-Aḥmar's *Bāṭin al-takālīf* and an anonymous *Kitāb al-ashkhāṣ*, the four pillars are Muḥammad, Fāṭir, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. Other parts of the Kaʿba are members of their family, for example the Black Stone is ʿAlī's nephew, Ṭālib ibn ʿAqīl, the floor of the Kaʿba is Fāṭima bint Asad, the mother of ʿAlī (not to be confused with Fāṭima/Fāṭir daughter of Muḥammad and the wife of ʿAlī), and the roof is Abū Tālib, the father of ʿAlī. [326]

The doctrine of the "mystical Kaʿba" seems to precede the period of the Nuṣayrīs, since it is found in Ibn Sinān's *Kitāb al-ḥujub wa-'l-anwār*. In this source the *ghālī* Abū 'l-Khattāb explains to Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar the mystical meaning of the Kaʿba. According to this source "the holy house of God" (*bayt Allāh al-ḥarām*) is God (the *maʿnā*) who is the house from which the *hijāb* Muḥammad talks. The door of the Kaʿba is the *bāb* Salmān, the lock (*qufl*) is Ḥusayn and the key (*miftāḥ*) is the *qāʾim* (raiser, i.e. the Messiah). The carpet is Muḥammad, the *ism*. The *kiswa*, the cover of the Kaʿba is red and white: the red represents the spilling of the blood of the *aḍḍād* and the white represents the esoteric appearance of God in the form of Bahmān (a Persian element in Nuṣayrī religion). Abū 'l-Khattāb also indentifies the Black Stone with the *yatīm* Miqdād.[327]

The replacement of the concrete Kaʿba by the mystical Kaʿba characterizes the symbolic and spiritual nature of the Nuṣayrī religion. There is neither a perceptible object of prayer nor a place of prayer. There is no Nuṣayrī mosque because the *masjid* (pl. *masājid*, mosque) is the Imām and the understanding of his mystical nature (*maʿrifat al-Imām*).[328] Hence the accusation against the Nuṣayrīs that they do not pray because they do not have mosques in their villages is baseless. The Nuṣayrīs, like the Druzes, pray in private houses. Their cult is not public but discreet, because of the obligation of *taqiyya*.

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[326] *HAD*, pp. 174–175. A similar but not identical desription of the *ashkhāṣ* who form the Kaʿba is found in *BS*, pp. 30–31.

[327] *HUA*, pp. 36–37.

[328] Ibid., pp. 110, 118; *AAM*, p. 286.

9.2 Taqiyya, jihād *and other commandments*

9.2.1 Taqiyya/kitmān

The *ṣawm* represents the duty to conceal the mystical religion. Etan Kohlberg explained the term *taqiyya* literally as "fear", "caution" and technically as self-protection by dissimulation and the safeguarding of secrets. It is a method of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*. The word *taqiyya* is a synonym for *kitmān* (concealment) as opposed to *idhāʿa* (public declaration). This doctrine was practiced not only to protect Shīʿī society against the Sunnī oppressor, but also to conceal the esoteric knowledge, to keep it secret (*sirran*) and not public (*ʿalaniyyan*), hidden from those who are not worthy to have it. Kohlberg divides the *taqiyya* into two types: a "prudential *taqiyya*" against external enemies and a "non-prudential *taqiyya*" against the uninitiated. Kohlberg sees the *taqiyya* as one of the most important tenets of Shīʿism. The Imām Jaʿfar is cited in Shīʿī sources saying: "*taqiyya* is our religion". Equally, the *idhāʿa* is considered a severe sin, which can result in excommunication. Nevertheless, Jaʿfar said that the *taqiyya* should be practiced according to need. Thus, the more a Shīʿī group was persecuted, the more it used *taqiyya*.[329]

For the Nuṣayrīs, the two types of *taqiyya* cannot be divided. The knowledge of the *muwaḥḥidūn* is not to be revealed both because it is a gnosis possessed by a minority of initiated mystics and because the declaration of such tenets would cause excommunication, death or other persecutions. The world that surrounds the *muwaḥḥidūn* is an evil one, and it would make wrong use of the esoteric knowledge. At the same time, in order to prevent danger and to keep the Nuṣayrī society safe, there is a need to present it outwardly as a "normal" Imāmī group. For the members of the sect, the figure of al-Khaṣībī and his double life was and still is an example of a successful use of *taqiyya*. Among the sect's literature are several *ẓāhir* books, which characterizes their use of *taqiyya* in order to be considered part of the exoteric Shīʿa. The most important works of this kind are al-Khasībī's *Hidāya al-kubrā* and Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba's *Tuḥfat al-ʿuqūl* (or *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl* in the Imāmī version), both cited in Imāmī/orthodox Shīʿī literature (see Appendix 1).

[329] E. Kohlberg, "Taqiyya in Shīʿī theology and religion", in H. G. Kippenberg and G. G. Stroumza (eds.), *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 345–380.

While Imāmī scholars of the tenth century argued as to whether *taqiyya/kitmān* is a permanent obligation or is only used in time of need,[330] in the Nuṣayrī religion it is an everlasting obligation (*farḍ*),[331] and the learning of the *ʿilm al-tawḥīd* without *taqiyya* is like "reading the Qurʾān in the *ḥammām* [public bath]".[332] Al-Adhanī explains that the Nuṣayrīs consider themselves to be the body and other religions the clothes. Hence, they permit themselves to "wear" different clothes, while they keep their real identity secret. According to al-Adhanī, the Nuṣayrīs compare a person who neglects *taqiyya* with a madman walking naked in the market.[333]

9.2.2 *Nuṣayrī division into* ʿāmma *and* khāṣṣa

Taqiyya was a means of survival for the Nuṣayrīs from the days of al-Khaṣībī. The more the dimensions of danger grew, the more *taqiyya* was strictly maintained. The actual internal division of the sect into two groups, of the ignorant mass (*ʿāmma*, sing. *ʿāmm*) and a minority of the initiated elite (*khāṣṣa*, sing. *khāṣṣ*) is the final outcome of the process of growing strictness in *taqiyya*. This division is also found within the Druze sect, though with a different terminology, of *juhhāl* (the ignorant ones) and *ʿuqqāl* (the wise ones). However, the divisions between these two groups did not exist from the time of their emergence, and it is not certain whether they existed prior to the eleventh century. The earliest appearance of the antithetical terms "masses" and "initiates" occurs in the twelfth century *Munāẓarat al-Nashshābī*, which concludes with the following sentence:

> The scholars [*ʿulamāʾ*] became few and [most of] the religious men [*fuqahāʾ*] died, as the proverb says, and we who were left are so few, so we presented proofs in our book…its contents would be useful for the prayer leader [*imām*], and he in turn will teach it to the *khāṣṣ* and the *ʿāmm*.[334]

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[330] The main controversy was between Ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991) and Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022). While the first considered *taqiyya* to be an obligation (*farḍ*) as important as prayer, the latter claimed that it is needed only in times of danger. See L. Clark, "*Taqiyya* in Twelver Shiʾism", in T. Lawson (ed.) *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005). pp. 55–56.

[331] *HAD*, pp. 146, 168–169; *ARM*, p. 14.

[332] *AAM*, p. 279. The use of the *ḥammām* for this example is not suprising. Muslims had been using public baths, for relaxation and washing, since the seventh century. See, for example, M. G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2005), pp. 269–270.

[333] *BS*, p. 82.

[334] *MN*, fol. 152b.

Although this terminology exists in this text, the demand that the Imām teach both groups shows that the division between them was not total, as it is today, and the ʿ*āmma* were more involved in religious matters.

In the case of the Druzes, it is also difficult to decide when exactly this division into two groups took place. Kais Firro notes that these terms exist in early writings of the sect, but the date of the division itself is unclear.[335] Like the Nuṣayrīs, the Druzes passed from a period of propaganda (*daʿwa* in Druze terminology) when the religion was preached openly, into a state of concealment and *taqiyya* when the sect was persecuted.[336] In both cases, the dissemination period was short but sufficient to increase the membership of the sect and to create a community. A long period of persecution followed during which these two communities did not grow but only survived. We can therefore assume that the division of the Nuṣayrī sect into elite and masses took place during the second period that began in the eleventh century, when the sect was left without any powerful supporters. Although medieval sources do not mention such a division, it seems that it was created by the internal, social, and religious differences between members of the sect from the eleventh century. From that period onwards, the sect consisted of two groups, the intellectual urban leaders and the rural people who embraced Nuṣayrism. The two groups that eventually emerged—the initiated shaykhs and the converted believers—were defined in time as *khāṣṣa* and ʿ*āmma*, based on the traditional Imāmī division of the Muslims into the exalted Shīʿī community and the mass of Sunnīs.[337] This definition was also based on an economic terminology for the upper and lower layers of society.[338] This hypothesis is backed by M. A. J. Beg's assumption that the elite of the *khāṣṣa* had an economic and cultural advantage over the ʿ*āmma*, which gave the former the ability to control and even to manipulate the latter. Beg's most relevant claim in this context is his citation of the Baghdadian

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[335] Firro, *History of the Druzes*, pp. 25, 27.

[336] Ibid., pp. 13–17.

[337] According to Moezzi, the duality of *khāṣṣa* and ʿ*āmma* is part of a larger dual Imāmī worldview of superior and inferior aspects including *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir, aql* and *jahl, imām*s and *aḍdād, aṣḥāb al-yamīn* and *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* (people of the right, people of the left). See M. A. Amir-Moezzi, "Only the man of God is human: Theology and mystical anthropology according to early Imāmī exegesis", in E. Kohlberg (ed.), *Shīʿism* (Aldershot, Hants/Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), pp. 4–5.

[338] See, for example, L. Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 9.

Muʿtazilī theologian Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023), that "it was the *ʿāmma* which made up the hordes of the extremist sects".[339] Al-Tawḥīdī's claim is important not only because he was a contemporary of the most important propagator of Nuṣayrīsm in Syria, al-Ṭabarānī, but also because of the link that he made between the spiritual and the economic advantages of the *khāṣṣa*. In one of his *fatwā*s Ibn Taymiyya mentions a division inside the Nuṣayrī community of his time (fourteenth century), but he used other terminology: *juhhāl* (sing. *jāhil*, ignorant) and *ḥudhdhāq* (sing *ḥādhiq*, intelligent).[340] But since Ibn Taymiyya confuses the Ismāʿīlīs and the Nuṣayrīs, it is possible that he is describing the Druzes. A comparative study of the formation of this dual society in Nuṣayrī and Druze societies is yet to be made; such a study should consider the similar circumstances of the two sects.

Another important means of *taqiyya*, which is similar to that of the Druzes, is the concealment of the place of prayer. While the Druzes use a marginal house in the village, called *khalwa* (place of seclusion), the Nuṣayrīs simply call the place *manzil*[341] or the synonym *bayt* (house),[342] to describe its simplicity and insignificance, as opposed to the *masjid* (mosque). Medieval as well as modern texts of the sect use this simple term for the place of prayer. Each shaykh in turn invites the *khāṣṣa* to hold a meeting in his house for various purposes such as prayer, study, initiation or the celebration of a holiday. This custom has been practiced continually from the time of the founders of the sect until the present period. Ibn Nuṣayr's meeting with his mystical circle took place at his home in Basra. Al-Khaṣībī's meetings with other Shīʿī scholars and with his disciples took place in private homes. In Nashshābī's account, the polemical meetings also took place in private homes. To sum up, the place for the Nuṣayrī religious experience, as the Nuṣayrī religion itself, is secret and intimate. The regular change of meeting place from the home of one shaykh to another is a means of *taqiyya* that in time became a tradition. Dussaud's citation from an anonymous manuscript that "the Nuṣayriyya has no prayer place like the Muslims and the Christians, but they meet every period

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339 M. A. J. Beg, "*Al-khāṣṣa wa-'l-ʿāmma*", *EI*² IV (1978), pp. 1098–1099.

340 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Najdī al-Ḥanbalī, *Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Raḥma, 1990), vol. 4, pp. 102–103.

341 See, for example, *MA*, p. 133; *MN*, fol. 111a.

342 *BS*, p. 36.

of time in a place that they decide upon", is relevant to the medieval period as well as to his time.[343] While the mosque represents the *ẓāhir*, the house meeting represents the *bāṭin*. The former signifies public, open and mass practice of Islam, the latter represents another aspect of Islam, which is private, secret and restricted to a small group of mystic initiates.

9.2.3 *The spiritual* jihād

In Nuṣayrī theology the classic Islamic meaning of *jihād* as a holy war does not exist in the present. It was waged by ʿAlī and later by some *bāb*s, such as ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya and Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb, and it will be renewed at the end of time. In connection with the issue of *nidāʾ* and *khuṭba*, it was explained earlier that the act of self-sacrifice ended with the Docetic martyrdom of Ibn Nuṣayr and may have been attempted once again by al-Khaṣībī in Baghdad. Active rebellion against the authorities was not undertaken by any of the significant Ghulāt after that of Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb. In addition, the sect did not have enough power to play a military role in the events of their region prior to the emergence of Makzūn al-Sinjārī in the thirteenth century. There is an account of resistance to the Crusader conquest, but there are no records of these events in the sect's writings. Although Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā* demanded that Nuṣayrīs should not be allowed to participate in *jihād*, the sect's sources are silent as to the obligation of an active holy war against external enemies of Islam. Makzūn al-Sinjārī's obligation of the *jihād al-ẓāhir* was not applied by his successors. Thus *jihād* in Nuṣayrī theology is not a sacrifice of life or a rebellion, nor is it a holy war against the infidels. It is reasonable to assume that the idea of an active war was developed only as a result of al-Sinjārī's military activity and the influence of the warriors who came with him, settled in Jabala, and embraced Nuṣayrism.

Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba, in *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn*, deals with the issue of *bāṭin al-jihād* (the mystical struggle/effort). He explains that there are two kinds of *jihād*. In the first *jihād*, the believer fights the enemies of the Imāms, the *nawāṣib* (sing. *nāṣibī*), in loyalty to the Imāms and in repudiation of their enemies (*walāya* and *barāʾa*). The second and more powerful *jihād* is the *jihād al-nafs* (the effort of the spirit), which is "a struggle against the soul that is tempting [people] to do bad acts"

[343] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, p. 137, note 1.

(*mujāhadat al-nafs allatī hiya 'l-ammāra bi-'l-sū'*).[344] In Imāmī doctrine the *jihād al-nafs* is also considered more powerful and thus it is called "the greater *jihād*", while the holy war is the "lesser *jihād*" (*al-jihād al-akbar* and *al-jihād al-aṣghar*).[345]

The few Nuṣayrī writings that deal with the subject seem to indicate that the sect embraced the general Shīʿī quietist policy (*quʿūd*) that characterizes the mainstream of the Jaʿfarī Shīʿa (followers of the Imām Jaʿfar al-Sādiq). Since after the brief caliphate of ʿAlī (36/656–41/661) the enemies of the Shīʿīs took power and oppressed the community of the Imāms, *taqiyya* took the place of *jihād*, as a means of self-defence. Shaykh al-Mufīd said that: "The concealment of our secret is a holy struggle for God" (*kitmān sirrinā jihād fī sabīl Allāh*).[346] As in Imāmī theology, in Nuṣayrīsm the holy war is postponed to the Judgment Day when ʿAlī will return holding his sword, the *dhū 'l-faqār*,[347] to avenge all the enemies of the Shīʿa. Until then, *taqiyya* is equal to *jihād*. Al-Ṣādiq is cited in Imāmī sources saying, "every believer is a *shahīd* (pl. *shuhadā'*, martyr), even if he dies in his bed".[348] Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba cites Abān ibn Taghlib (d. 141/758), a disciple of al-Sādiq, who says about his master, "When people were reminding him of those who are dying on the frontiers, he used to say: Alas for them! What is the point of their act? They hasten their death in this world and in the next world. There are no other *shuhadā'* except our Shīʿa, even if they die in their bed".[349]

The term *shahīd* is also given an allegorical explanation in Nuṣayrī theology. In his *Risāla 'l-Masīḥiyya*, al-Ṭabarānī explains that those *shuhadā'* who died with Jesus received their name according to the

[344] *HAD*, p. 176. See also in *AAM*, p. 264; *BS*, pp. 24–25; *DMS*, p. 94.

[345] E. Kohlberg, "The development of the Imāmī Shīʿī doctrine of *jihād*", in E. Kohlberg (ed.) *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism*, XV, p. 66. See the discussion of *jihād* in early Shīʿīsm in ibid., pp. 64–80. See also the bibliography given in A. J. Newman, *The Formative Period of of Twelver Shīʿism* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), p. 189, note 45.

[346] E. Kohlberg, "The development of the Imāmī Shīʿī doctrine of *jihād*", p. 66.

[347] Although the sword of ʿAlī represents the *shakhṣ* of the *yatīm* al-Miqdād in one tradition (see *MKH*, p. 196), it appears in all the rest of the sect's sources, such as in the Imāmī tradition, as the sword of the apocalyptic revenge. Its name derives from the Arabic plural of *faqāra* (vertebra), referring to the special form of its blade. See other explanations concerning this sword, in B. M. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics and Territory in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 35–36.

[348] Ibid., p. 78.

[349] *HAD*, p. 176.

original meaning of the verb *shahida* (to witness). The reason they were called *shuhadā* is not because they died, since according to the doctrine of Docetism they did not die. The real meaning of *shuhadāʾ* is not "martyrs" but "witnesses", because the saints who died only in appearance were witnessing Jesus in heaven. "The killing did not [even] touch them", explains al-Ṭabarānī, "but it happened to the *aḍdād*... as it appears in His saying: Those who were killed for the sake of Allāh are not considered dead, but on the contrary, they are alive and nurtured by their Lord" [Qurʾān, Āl ʿImrān [3]: 169].[350]

Another explanation of *jihād* in Nuṣayrī theology is linked to the process of initiation; it is the disciple's effort to appease his master (*jihād al-tilmīdh riḍā ʾl-ʿālim*), as "the effort of the woman to please her husband".[351] This doctrine creates an interesting link between the obligation of the *jihād* and the obligation of *birr al-ikhwān* (reverence of brethren), the respect between the members of the sect, who are all considered to be one family. Although the obligation of *birr al-ikhwān* exists also in Imāmī Shīʿism,[352] it gains another dimension in Nuṣayrī theology as a result of the mystic fraternity between the members of the sect. The duty of *barāʾa* (repudiation) is the only active way to attack the enemies of the sect. In his *Dīwān*, al-Khaṣībī cursed the *aḍdād*, the *muqaṣṣira*, the followers of Isḥāq al-Aḥmar and the groups that were considered heretics: the Ismāʿīlīs, the Qarmaṭians, the followers of Ḥallāj (Ṣūfīs) and other lesser known sects.[353]

9.3 *The universal* bāṭin *of commandments and prohibitions*

There is a great amount of detail concerning the Islamic *sharīʿa* that is absent in the Nuṣayrī writings. While the *sharīʿa* laws concern the *uṣūl* (roots), the basic principles of the law, Nuṣayrī writings lack the discussion of the *furūʿ* (branches, subsidiary details). Since the Nuṣayriyya considered itself a Shīʿī sect, and even the "true Shīʿa", in matters which are not discussed it must be supposed that the members of the sect followed a legal code close to the Imāmī *sharīʿa*. There are

350 *RM*, p. 302.
351 *AAM*, p. 263. The two obligations also appear together in *HAD*, p. 176.
352 See, for example, M. M. Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shiʾite Identity in Early Islam* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 244.
353 *DKH*, fol. 19a, 20b, 24a, 28a, 36a, 44b–45a, 47b, 53b, 54a, 61b, 62b–63a, 71b, 75b, 89a, 96b, 98a, 99a.

some references to the *furūʿ* scattered among the sect's writings, but these serve only as explanations for the obligations of the mystics. For example, the polytheism (*shirk*) of a mystic is compared with committing a crime (*jināya*)[354] and the repudiation of the sinner is compared to the amputation of a thief's hand (*qaṭʿ al-yad*).[355] The divulgence of the sect's secrets by one of its members is likened to adultery (*zināʾ*), and a person who commits it is compared to a prostitute (*zāniya*); thus it is called "the dishonor of the secret" (*hatk al-sirr*).[356] The mystic's prayer not to die without completing his study is compared to the prayer for rain (*istisqāʾ*) in a period of drought.[357] The study of the mystic with a shaykh in the absence of the *bāb* is compared to the purification of the hands with sand (*tayammum*) when there is a lack of water.[358] In the process of initiation, a disciple who is disloyal to his master can be expelled, an act that is compared with divorce (*ṭalāq*).[359] As to the proscribed foods, the interdiction of impure foods such as carrion meat, blood and swine (Qurān, al-Māʾida [3]: 3) is explained by the fact that they represent the three *aḍdād* (the three first caliphs). The same Qurʾānic verse mentions the prohibition of eating meat that has not been slaughtered in the name of Allāh (his name must be pronounced to make the meat *ḥalāl*, permitted for eating). This obligation is explained as representing the prohibition to teach the *ʿilm al-tawḥīd* to people with a lineage (*nasab*) to the Umayyad or ʿAbbāsid families.[360]

These examples show an allegorical interpretation of the *furūʿ* rather than their application in Nuṣayrī religion. In general, the observance of the *ẓāhir*, the regular practical obligations of Islam, during the Middle Ages is unclear. Although the shaykhs of the sect were ordered not to neglect them, it seems that the study of their mystical meaning was more important than their *ẓāhir* application. ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba explains in the sixth chapter of his *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif*, that the *bāṭin* is a universal message, an inner truth for all mankind. The *ẓāhir* is merely the means to teach people the complicated *bāṭin*. God has sent to each civiliza-

[354] *HAD*, p. 116.
[355] Ibid., p. 135.
[356] *HUA*, p. 33; *KS*, fol. 102a.
[357] *KBS*, p. 269; *HAD*, p. 113.
[358] *KBS*, p. 266.
[359] *HAD*, p. 136.
[360] *HIF*, p. 67.

tion different prophets and messengers with different laws, but the goal was to teach them the same mystical message. ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba rejected the principle of *badāʾ* (change in God's decision),[361] and explains that Jews, Persians, Christians, Muslims and others were given different codes of the *sharīʿa*, but this does not means that God changed his laws, because their *bāṭin* was the same one:

> Then [after Jesus] Muḥammad brought a different and contradictory *sharīʿa* [to that of the Jews and the Christians] and ordered them [the Muslims] to turn to the Kaʿba, to perform *jihād*, to observe the *ṣawm* in Ramaḍān and respect this month. He prohibited the swine's meat and other foods and abolished previous laws [*nasakha*]. God is too mighty and honorable to order a thing and ask for its application and then to abolish it and change it, then to send a prophet…then another prophet to order the opposite. God is exalted from this [changing nature] because the Most Intelligent does not change or transform from one situation to another. He is too exalted to be influenced by physical needs…his justice is the same for all, he ordered them all [all civilizations] to have inner knowledge [*maʿrifa*], which will result in reward [*thawāb*], and prohibited ignorance, which will result in punishment [*ʿiqāb*]. All the given laws [*sharāʾiʿ*] of permission and prohibition [*taḥlīl wa-taḥrīm*], orders and interdictions are all [symbols of the] *ashkhāṣ* [sing. *shakhṣ*, person] and signify the same; they are [symbols of] *ashkhāṣ* whom God ordered to know and to obey and *ashkhāṣ* whom God prohibited [from following] and demanded they repudiate them [*amara bi-ʾl-barāʾa minhum*]. All of these [laws] call for the same thing, which is the significance of the *bāṭin* and which we [the Nuṣayrīs] possess, and which are transmitted to us from the the credibles [Imāms].[362]

ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba's explanation is highly valuable for the understanding of what is viewed in research as Nuṣayrī syncretism. It is the result of a concept of universal mysticism. Nuṣayrism was originally meant to turn into a universal message spread throughout the Muslim world by propagators, and not into the secret code of a persecuted sect. As such it should have been suitable for all the communities in the Muslim world, and for the Muslims and Christians of Iraq and Syria in particular.

An important commandment which appears in ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba's explanation is the duty of *barāʾa*, the repudiation of the enemies of

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[361] Compare with the contradictory view of *Kitāb al-usūs* on this issue in Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 63; bibliography concerning the *badāʾ*, in ibid., pp. 63–64, note 122.

[362] *HAIH*, pp. 259–261.

the Imāms, which is the negative of the *walāya*, loyalty to the Imāms.[363] This Shīʿī doctrine of dissociation from enemies is linked with the demand to curse the Companions of the Prophet (*sabb al-ṣaḥāba*) who were the enemies of ʿAlī.[364]

The allegorical interpretation of the *sharīʿa* led to the creation of a particular Shīʿī identity that was different from the Imāmī; this identity was characterized by the creation of an exclusive calendar based on the *bāṭin*.

10. *The Nuṣayrī holidays and the creation of a new calendar*

The process of turning the *ʿilm al-tawḥīd* from ideas into practice seems to have begun in the time of al-Khaṣībī and was developed by his successor al-Jillī. The complex issues of study in the *majlis* that characterized the Numayriyya/Namīriyya could be grasped and developed only by the intellectual leaders of the Nuṣayriyya. The enlargment of the community demanded the creation of organized rituals for the mass of believers. In order to be attractive to diverse communities of potential converts (Christians, Sunnī and Shīʿī Muslims, Zoroastrians and others), the sect needed to expand its message into the quasi-universal mystical message explained above. Thus, while al-Khaṣībī emphasized the mystical meaning of Shīʿī and Zoroastrian holidays, al-Jillī and al-Ṭabarānī included Christian elements by adding Christian holidays to the Nuṣayrī calendar, although all the non-Muslim holidays were completely altered from their original significance to be replaced by Nuṣayrī mysticism. The combination of three religious components derived from Shīʿism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity correspond to the three human components in medieval Nuṣayrī society: Shīʿīs (Arabs and *mawālī*) as well as Zoroastrian Persians and Christians converted to Nuṣayrīsm. The process of turning Nụsayrī ideas into practical holidays reached maturity in al-Ṭabarānī's *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*.

Rudolf Strothmann's important critical edition of this book (see Appendix 1) was used by all subsequent scholars in the field, including Massignon, Corbin, Halm, and more recently Bar-Asher and Kofsky,

[363] Concerning this doctrine in Imāmī Shīʿism, see E. Kohlberg, "Barāʾa in Shīʿī doctrine", *JSAI* 7 (1986), pp. 139–175. See a nineteenth-century version of a Nuṣayrī *barāʾa*, in *BS*, pp. 44–45, 53.

[364] E. Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī views on the Ṣaḥāba", *JSAI* 5 (1984), pp. 143–175.

who dedicated a chapter in *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion* to the book,[365] which deals merely with what they call the "Muslim Festivals". An older description of the Nuṣayrī holidays is presented in the studies of Lyde and Dussaud, but they are based mainly on documents from the nineteenth century, the *Bākūra* of Sulaymān al-Adhanī and the Nuṣayrī Catechism.[366]

Although al-Ṭabarānī's *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* remains the main source, new available souces included in the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* allow a more complete description of the Nuṣayrī holidays and the reconstruction of the original Nuṣayrī calendar from the time of the founders of the sect. In the following description of the holidays, an attempt is made to complete the work begun by Bar-Asher and Kofsky, and to present a complete picture of the Nuṣayrī calendar, including all the festivals and sacred days.

To reconstruct the order of the Nuṣayrī calendar is a complicated task. Not only was the original meaning of a holiday altered, or given an allegorical interpretation, but even its date was sometimes changed. Moreover, the complexity of the Nuṣayrī calendar stems from the fact that it is based on two different but coexisting calendar systems. The first is the Muslim calendar, which is based on a lunar system in which the dates of the holidays do not change. The original Muslim calendar, which al-Ṭabarānī calls the "Arabic year" (*al-sana al-ʿArabiyya*) begins with Muḥarram and ends with Dhū ʾl-Ḥijja. But al-Ṭabarānī presents a different order of months in what he calls "the year of the monotheists, the honorable sect of al-Khaṣībī and of al-Jillī" (*sanat al-muwaḥḥidīn al-ṭāʾifa al-Khaṣībiyya al-jalīla al-Jilliyya*), which begins with Ramaḍān (originally the ninth month) and ends in Shaʿbān (originally the eighth month).[367] The second calendar system, in which al-Ṭabarānī inserted holidays of Christian and Iranian origin, is based on a solar system consisting of Babylonian months in Arabic. This calendar includes holidays that were originally based on the Persian calendar (*al-sana al-Fārisiyya*) and the Julian calendar (*al-sana al-Rūmiyya*); their dates were changed in the Nuṣayrī calendar.

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[365] Chapter 6, pp. 111–152.

[366] Lyde, *The Asian Mystery*, pp. 149–165; Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, pp. 136–152. Dussaud's limited use of al-Ṭabarānī's *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* and his over-reliance on the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* is criticized in H. Lammens, "Les Noṣairīs furent-ils chrétiens? A propos d'un livre récent", *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 5 (1900), p. 49.

[367] *MA*, p. 19.

Although the Nuṣayrī calendar contains elements from three religious sources, al-Ṭabarānī divides the holidays into ethnic origins: Roman/Hellenistic, Arab and Persian. In other words, according to his concept, the Nuṣayrī religion contains components of three ethnic sources, while the religious identity of the holidays is the same: that of Nuṣayrism. Again, there is another indication of the ethnic structure of the *muwaḥḥidūn* as well as that of their potential converts in the eleventh century. Bar-Asher and Kofsky quite reasonably note that the Nuṣayrī calendar symbolizes the creation of a new and unique identity,[368] and conclude that it reflects the syncretist nature of the sect. However, their definition of the Nuṣayrī holidays from Islamic sources as "the Muslim holidays" (instead of the original "Arab holidays") is problematic. Since Shīʿī mysticism and allegorical interpretations of the Qurʾān provide most of the explanation for all the sect's holidays, including holidays of Persian and Christian origin, a separation of the holidays into Muslim and non-Muslim holidays would be unjust. It is interesting to note al-Ṭabarānī's focus on ethnicity to the level of including most of the holidays of Shīʿī origin in what he defines as "Persian holidays": *Maqtal Dulām, al-Mubāhala* and *al-Firāsh*. Suprisingly, Christmas is also included in the Persian holidays.[369]

In Nuṣayrī tradition, the mystical meanings of the "Arab and Persian holidays" were transmitted by Muḥammad ibn Sinān from the Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā. According to this tradition, which appears at the beginning of the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, the Imām transmitted his message to his mystical circle (the *ʿārifūn*) whose members had obtained the esoteric and exoteric knowledge of the *tawḥīd*, and explained to them and to Muḥammad ibn Sinān the two aspects of the holidays, the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*.[370] Although this tradition serves as the introduction to the book, al-Khaṣībī and al-Ṭabarānī himself are the main sources for the content of the book. The following list presents the Nuṣayrī holidays and their meanings, according to their order in the appearance in the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, and concludes with a synoptic table.

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368 Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 111.

369 *MA*, p. 10. See the same division of these holidays into Arab and Persian holidays, in *DMA*, fol. 151b–154a.

370 Ibid., pp. 4–5.

10.1 *The fast* (ṣawm) *of Ramaḍān and ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*

The month of mercy and of the revelation of the Qurʾān is marked by a fast in which food is not eaten during the daytime, as is the custom for the rest of the Muslims, but also includes abstention from speech. According to Nuṣayrī tradition, the holiday represents the *shakhṣ* of the Prophet Muḥammad's father ʿAbdallāh, who kept silent during this month.[371] The month of Ramaḍān has a special mystical meaning, since every day in it represents one of the Nuṣayrī *ashkhāṣ*.[372] The night of destiny (*laylat al-qadr*), which is the most significant night of the sacred month in which the Qurʾān was revealed, represents the most exalted of the *ashkhāṣ*, the Prophet Muḥammad. *Al-fiṭr*, the breaking of the fast, is also the abolition of the duty of silence. The holiday represents the *shakhṣ* of Fāṭir, the masculine form of Fāṭima, whose name is formed from the same root as the name of the holiday: f.ṭ.r. (to create).[373] In mystical Shīʿism, the silence (*sukūt*) in Ramaḍān represents the order to observe *kitmān*, the duty to keep the religion secret.[374] Thus, both the *shakhṣ* and the *ʿīd*, Fāṭir and the *fiṭr*, represent the abolition of the *taqiyya* at the end of time.[375]

10.2 *The* Ḥajj *and ʿĪd al-Adḥā*

The *ḥajj* in the Nuṣayrī religion is a long mystical process that can last for several lifetimes of a mystic, and thus it is not marked by a specific holiday. Indeed, it does not appear in the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* at all. However, the Muslim holiday following the pilgrimage, the ʿĪd al-Adḥā, is celebrated by the Nuṣayrīs. The sacrifice of *al-adḥā* represents the slaughter of the *aḍdād*, the enemies of the Imāms, by the *mahdī* at the end of time.[376] In al-Ṭabarānī's explanations of the ʿĪd al-Adḥā in the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, we find a complete citation of *Kitāb sharḥ al-sabʿīn*. This last source is attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and transmitted by Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Juʿfī; according to it, the infidels and the

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371 *HAD*, p. 177; *KBS*, pp. 253–254; HAD, p. 177.

372 *KBS*, p. 265; *RR*, pp. 77–81; *DMA*, fol. 137a–142b.

373 *MA*, pp. 12–18; *MKH*, pp. 195–196; *HAD*, p. 177; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 114–119.

374 Ibid., 118; T. Lawson, *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), p. 53.

375 *HAD*, p. 177.

376 *KBS*, pp. 253–254; *MA*, pp. 25–26; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 119–120.

enemies of the Imāms are punished by transmigration into animals that are slaughtered on this holiday.[377]

10.3 *ʿĪd al-Ghadīr: celebration of the declaration of the* maʿnā*'s divinity*

The Ghadīr holiday, celebrated on 18 Dhū 'l-Ḥijja, is the first of a series of particular Shīʿī holidays that commemorate significant events in the lives of the first Imāms, notably ʿAlī and Ḥusayn. Ghadīr Khumm is the name of the place where, according to Shīʿī tradition, the Prophet Muḥammad is said to have declared ʿAlī his spiritual successor. Nuṣayrī tradition gives an allegorical interpretation to this, explaining it as Muḥammad's declaration of ʿAlī as God. In other words, ʿĪd al-Ghadīr is the holiday of the *ism*'s declaration of the divinity of the *maʿnā* before humanity.[378] It is interesting to compare the Prophet Muḥammad's declaration according to the two versions, the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*:

Imāmī version:
man kuntu mawlāhu fa-ʿAlī mawlāhu (everyone whose patron I am ʿAlī is his patron)

Nuṣayrī version:
man kuntu mawlāhu fa-ʿAlī maʿnāhu (everyone whose patron I am ʿAlī is his *maʿnā*).[379]

10.4 *ʿĪd al-Mubāhala: celebration of the debate with the Christians of Najrān*

The Mubāhala, celebrated on 21 Dhū 'l-Hijja, is the religious debate over the nature of Jesus, which is believed by the Shīʿīs to have taken place between the Christians of Najrān (northwest Yemen) and the Prophet

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[377] *MA*, pp. 28–49.

[378] *MA*, pp. 54–68; *KBS*, p. 270; *RA*, p. 323; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 36, 120–128.

[379] For the declaration of the *maʿnā*'s divinity in verse in al-Khaṣībī's *al-Qaṣīda al-Ghadīriyya*, see *DKH*, fol. 9a–12a (*Yawm ghadīr yawm surūr*). For the Muslim debate over the meaning of this phrase of Muḥammad, see Halm, *Shīʿism*, pp. 7–8; M. J. Kister, "Ādam: A study of some legends in Tafsīr and Ḥadīth literature", *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993), p. 127; P. Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 73.

Muḥammad, followed by ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. The former claimed that Jesus was God's son, while the latter explained that he was only human. The leader of the Najrānīs, who met the Prophet, was deeply impressed by his family members. Eventually, the Christians signed a treaty of protection under Islamic law. The Nuṣayrīs explain this by the conviction of the Najrānīs, who understood the divine nature of ʿAlī and Muḥammad.[380] During the holiday a special chapter of the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* concerning the six revelations (*tajalliyyāt*) is read by the mystics of the sect. This chapter concerns the mystical meaning of the six days of creation. It is interesting that al-Ṭabarānī bases the words of the Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir concerning these six days on the work of certain Greek thinkers who applied the mystical meaning of the number six to philosophy and grammar. He mentions Arisṭūṭālīs (Aristotle, d. 322), Hirmis al-Harāmisa (Hermes Trismegistus, the ancient Egyptian god of wisdom also worshipped by the Greeks),[381] and a certain Bārūn of Alexandria who wrote a commentary on Dīnāṭūs (the Roman grammarian Donatus from the fourth century or the Greek Grammarian Dionysius Thrax from the second century BCE).[382]

10.5 *ʿĪd al-Firāsh: the holiday of the bed*

On 29 Dhū 'l-Hijja, a significant event is celebrated. When the Prophet Muḥammad left Mecca and his enemies planned to kill him in his bed (*firāsh*), his cousin ʿAlī took his place, thus showing his willingness to sacrifice himself to save the Prophet's life. For the Nuṣayrīs, the infidel murderers were personifications of the *aḍdād*, thus the celebration is also that of a general triumph of good over evil.[383] On this day the members of the sect read a *qaṣīda* recounting the tradition of the bed written by Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh, a disciple of al-Khaṣībī.[384] Since the events

[380] *MA*, pp. 88–89.
[381] Concerning Hermes in Arab medieval writings and his association with the Qurʾānic Idrīs, see J. Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2001), pp. 20–24.
[382] *MA*, pp. 88–89. Al-Tabarānī refers to this grammarian when explaining the mystical meaning of the the six vowels (a, e, i, o, u, *sukūn*). On Dionysus and another of his explanations concerning the vowels, see P. Kraus, *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān: Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam*, vol. 2, p. 209, note 3.
[383] *MA*, pp. 97–106; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 142–143.
[384] *MA*, pp. 104–105.

of this holiday took place at night, this is the only celebration that is authorized at night, while all the other holidays must be celebrated during daylight.[385]

10.6 *ʿĪd ʿĀshūr: the holiday of 10 Muḥarram*

Al-Ṭabarānī explains that this holiday takes place on the tenth day of the first month of the "Arabic year" (*al-sana al-ʿArabiyya*). This is the only holiday that has an allegorical interpretation and also an inner explanation that totally contradicts its outward meaning. For the Imāmī Shīʿīs, the *ʿāshūr* (or *ʿāshūrāʾ*) is a day of a cosmic tragedy, the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn in Karbalāʾ (61/680), the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad, who should have arrived at Kufa to begin the struggle against the Umayyad tyrants and return the Muslims to their legitimate leadership. Although the Nuṣayrīs believe in the demonic nature of the Umayyads, they still claim that Ḥusayn's martyrdom was only in appearance, a docetic concept that is attributed to Jesus as well. Thus, the holiday changes its fundamental atmosphere, from mourning to happiness. The explanations of al-Ṭabarānī contain a criticism of the belief of the "outward Shīʿīs" (*ẓāhiriyyat al-Shīʿa*), that the Umayyads killed al-Ḥusayn and that his head was taken to the caliph. According to Nuṣayrī doctrine, since he is a personification of the *maʿnā*, al-Ḥusayn is immortal.[386] According to Imāmī tradition, the death of al-Ḥusayn is seen as a ransom for Ishmael's sacrifice. The Nuṣayrīs claim that it was Caliph ʿUmar who was killed in his place. Al-Ṭabarānī adds to the tradition of the ransom by saying that al-Ḥusayn miraculously gave one of his followers, Ḥanẓala al-Shibāmī, his own form to be killed in his place. Thus, Ḥanẓala was also ransomed by the death of ʿUmar.[387] The idea of al-Ḥusayn's replacement by Ḥanẓala seems to have prevailed in several Ghulāt groups, since al-Majlisī attacks this belief in his *Biḥār al-anwār* as a heresy prevalent in Kufa without mentioning the Nuṣayrīs. Al-Majlisī also condemns those who express joy and happiness on this day and explains that this was the order of Caliph Yazīd to celebrate al-Ḥusayn's execution.[388] However, the Nuṣayrīs are asked on this day to read three poems of

[385] *HIF*, pp. 63–64.
[386] *MA*, p. 107; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 128–129.
[387] *MA*, pp. 108–109; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 129–130.
[388] Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 44, pp. 270–271.

al-Khaṣībī in which he expresses joy and scorns those who "mourn their Lord".[389] On this holiday the Nuṣayrīs are obliged, as are the rest of the Shīʿīs, to perform the duty of *barāʾa*, the public cursing of the enemies of the Imāms and the Umayyads above all.[390] The Nuṣayrīs are also asked to curse two Arab tribes which are sub-clans of Quraysh: Taym, the clan of Abū Bakr and ʿAdī, the clan of ʿUmar.[391] Instead of the traditional Shīʿī pilgrimage to the tomb of al-Ḥusayn, Nuṣayrīs read a special prayer called *ziyāra* (literally, a pilgrimage to a tomb of a saint), in which they declare the following:

> I testify that you did not die nor were you murdered or defeated but you have made your disappearance appear [to the people] with your power and you veiled yourself from the eyes of the gazing people…since you are too powerful to be defeated, captured and killed and you can give life and death to whomever you wish.[392]

The term *ziyāra* thus changes its original significance into a prayer in honor of an occulted personification of the deity instead of a prayer for a dead saint. The same significance of *ziyāra* is used in the context of praise for Ibn Nuṣayr, who is also considered immortal.[393]

10.7 *Maqtal Dulām: celebration of the killing of ʿUmar*

Caliph ʿUmar's murder (24/644) is celebrated on 9 Rabīʿ al-Awwal. It was celebrated on this day by most of the Shīʿīs in the medieval period, and it later became an obligation under the Safavids in Iran,[394] even causing hostility between Shīʿīs and Sunnīs in the modern history of the Middle East.[395] Since ʿUmar is identified with Iblīs, the day of his death is an occasion for great joy and symbolizes, as other holidays, the triumph of good over evil. The source for the celebration of this day in the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* is a certain Amīr Abū ʿAbdallāh

[389] *MA*, pp. 108–115; *DKH*, fol. 28a–29b, 29b–31b, 37b–38a.
[390] *MA*, pp. 123–124. Concerning the obligation of *barāʾa*, see E. Kohlberg, "*Barāʾa* in Shīʿī doctrine", *JSAI* 7 (1986), pp. 139–175.
[391] *MA*, p. 124; *HUA*, p. 60.
[392] *MA*, pp. 124–125.
[393] Lyde's chapter concerning the pilgrimage to tombs of saints reflects merely the Nuṣayrī cults of his period (nineteenth century); see Lyde, *The Asian Mystery*, pp. 166–176.
[394] R. J. Abisaab, *Converting Persia* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), p. 47.
[395] See, for example, M. J. Fisher, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 177.

Muḥammad ibn Abī ʿAbbās,[396] probably a disciple of al-Jillī, whose location or occupation is unknown. According to al-Jillī, on the day of Maqtal Dulām all the enemies of God were killed, such as the biblical sons of Lot, Pharaoh, and the Qurʾānic *aṣḥāb al-fīl* (Yemeni fighters riding elephants who aimed to destroy the Kaʿba). On that day, called the "day of the celebration of *ahl al-bayt*", "the second Ghadīr" and other names reflecting happiness, well known miracles have occurred such as the resurrection of the dead by Jesus. The Nuṣayrīs are asked to wear clean clothes and to celebrate with a feast the destruction of all *aḍdād* from all periods of time.[397]

10.8 *The night of mid-Shaʿbān*

This holiday is observed by all Muslims as a night of forgiveness (*laylat al-barāʾāt*, 14/15 Shaʿbān), and by the Shīʿīs specifically as an occasion for pilgrimage to Karbalāʾ. This holiday is the last one of the "Year of al-Khaṣībī" (*al-sana al-Khaṣībiyya*), which begins with Ramaḍān and ends with Shaʿbān. On this night the Nuṣayrīs drink the *ʿabd al-nūr*, which is a wine permitted for drinking only on specific occasions.[398] Al-Ṭabarānī compares this night with the *laylat al-qadr*, which is also a night of great importance, when a person can ask forgiveness.[399] Three *ziyārāt* (sing. *ziyāra*) are read on this day in honor of Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr, the *ahl al-marātib* and the *maʿnā*. The third *ziyāra* contains a *barāʾa* against those who deny ʿAlī's divinity.[400] As in Maqtal Dulam,

[396] *MA*, pp. 126, 131, 164, 192.

[397] Ibid., pp. 133–153; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 136–141.

[398] Concerning the meaning of *ʿabd al-nūr* as a symbol of the divine light, see *TDN*, p. 219; *DM*, p. 147; Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, p. 97 and his citation from the poem of Muḥammad ibn Kalāzū; Lyde, *The Asian Mystery*, pp. 155–156; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 127, 169 note 25. Modern sources (nineteenth century) mention the use of wine for a *quddās* (mass). See *KMA*, pp. 244, 246–247, 248–249; *TDN*, pp. 216, 218–219; *BS*, pp. 40, 46. According to Nuṣayrī sources, this wine, used by initiated mystics, is "permitted among you, and is forbidden to others" (*ḥalāl lakum maʿakum ḥarām ʿalaykum maʿa ghayrikum*). See *ARM*, p. 24; *DM*, p. 146; *HAD*, p. 139.

[399] *MA*, p. 155.

[400] Ibid., pp. 156–163; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 143–144. Bar-Asher and Kofsky's claim that a pilgrimage to Ibn Nuṣayr's tomb is performed on that day is unacceptable, since Ibn Nuṣayr's death is not accepted by the Nuṣayrīs, because he is the *bāb*. Al-Ṭabarānī gives an explicit explanation, saying that for the mystics the place of prayer has no importance and that the *ziyāra* is an act of prayer reading not a pilgrimage. See *MA*, p. 157.

this holiday also contains a symbol of the victory of good over evil. A tradition which is read on the night tells the story of Salmān and Qanbar and their symbolic ride on two camels Ḍalāl and Wabāl ("going astray" and "disaster"), which represent the first two caliphs, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.[401]

10.9 Laylat al-Mīlād: *Christmas*

Christmas appears in the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* as the last holiday in the Gregorian calendar (*al-sanat al-Rūmiyya*, 24/25 of December). The celebration of Christmas in the Nuṣayrī tradition was seen by scholars as one of the most important proofs for Christian influence on Nuṣayrism. However, this assumption should be reviewed carefully. The chapter of *Laylat al-mīlād* contains a basic Christian framework, but it cannot be considered Christian chapter in any way since there is not a single citation from the Gospels. Al-Ṭabarānī uses only citations from the Qurʾān to explain the holy nature of Jesus and his miraculous birth by the Virgin Mary (for example, he cites Qurʾān, al-Taḥrīm [66]: 12). According to Nuṣayrī doctrine there is no difference between Jesus and Muḥammad or between Mary mother of Jesus and Āmina bint Wahb mother of Muḥammad. The former appeared in the *qubba al-Masīḥiyya* and the latter in the *qubba al-Muḥammadiyya*. The content of this holiday is not Christian but Nuṣayrī. The day marks the fact that Jesus "made his birth appear" (*aẓhara ʾl-wilāda*), a typical Nuṣayrī docetic concept. The Nuṣayrī Jesus has no human aspect at all, since there is no incarnation in al-Khaṣībī's Nuṣayrism. The source of the information in this chapter is al-Ṭabarānī's, master al-Jillī.[402] In addition, two of al-Khaṣībī's poems are read on this holiday, one concerning the Docetism of Jesus and the other his admiration for Jesus and for the Christian holy places in Syria.[403]

It is difficult to understand the nature of al-Ṭabarānī's Christian inspiration. On the one hand he cites from the most important Qurʾānic chapter against the belief in the Trinity, Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ (Qurʾān 112:3) denying the divine birth of Jesus from the Father.[404] On the other, he

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401 *MA*, pp. 164–168.
402 Ibid., p. 175.
403 Ibid., pp. 176–177; *DKH*, fol. 16b–18b, 47a–50b (*Bukhtu bi-sirrī* and *Saʾimtu ʾl-muqām*, see Appendix 6).
404 *MA*, p. 177, the citation appears at the beginning of the prayer for Christmas. See also *DKH*, fol. 6a.

shows great respect for Christian figures. It is only in this chapter that he calls Jesus not only by his Muslim name ʿĪsā, but also by his original Christian name Yasūʿ (from the Hebrew Yeshūʿa). The same applies to St. Peter who is called Simʿān (from the Hebrew Shimʿōn). In the same chapter, al-Ṭabarānī mentions the celebration of the *salāq*, Jesus' elevation to heaven, of *fisḥ*, the celebration of Easter, commemorating the rebirth of Jesus, as well as the *ishrāq*, the Eastern Church celebration of Epiphany, commemorating the baptism of Jesus. He also mentions *shaʿānīn*, the Sunday before Easter (Palm Sunday), commemorating Jesus' entry to Jerusalem before his Passion.[405] These Christian holidays appear in an earlier source, al-Jillī's *Risāla al-Masīḥiyya*, with brief explanations. Yet al-Jillī and al-Ṭabarānī do not demand that members of the sect observe these holidays, but only that they understand their mystical meaning and above all the docetic nature of Jesus' birth and crucifixion.[406] In the final prayer for the Nuṣayrī Christmas, al-Ṭabarānī refers to a triad, which is totally different from the Christian Trinity. Instead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he explains that the triad was manifested a few times in the *qubba al-Masīḥiyya* as follows:

maʿnā = ʿAlī: Yuḥannā, Shamʿūn Buṭrus (John and Peter)
hijāb = Muḥammad: ʿĪsā, Mār Jirjis (Jesus and St. George)
bāb = Salmān: Lūqā, Mattī, Marqus (Luke, Matthew and Mark).

Jesus is subordinated to John to fit the subordination of Muḥammad to ʿAlī. In this holiday the Nuṣayrīs are ordered to recite a testimony (*shahāda*) in which they declare their belief in these three manifestations of the deity.[407] It can therefore be concluded that the Nuṣayrī Christmas includes explanations of Qurʾānic verses focusing on Jesus and the Virgin Mary within a narrow Christian framework consisting of the title of this holiday and its date. The reason for the creation of this Islamized Christmas may well be the missionary nature of the Nuṣayrism in the time of al-Jillī and al-Ṭabarānī. This is probably the

[405] *MA*, pp. 319–320.
[406] *RM*, pp. 289–291. If al-Adhanī is reliable in his account of the Nuṣayrī holidays in the nineteenth century, several Christian holidays, including the holidays mentioned here, were celebrated by the members of the sect, as well as holidays that are not mentioned in medieval sources. According to his account, the *ʿīd al-mīlād* was moved to 15 December. See *BS*, pp. 34–36.
[407] *MA*, p. 179; *BS*, pp. 26–27 (*Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, *sūra* 11: *al-Shahāda*).

reason for al-Ṭabarānī's praise of "what is said in the church, the precious words of the monks in Mār Simʿān…and in the Mār Jirjis".[408]

10.10 *Holiday of 17 Ādhār (March)*

This holiday is in honor of the *bāb* Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr. The significance of the number 17 was discussed earlier. The source of this holiday is Ibn Nuṣayr's *Kitāb al-akwār wa-'l-adwār al-Nūrāniyya*, telling the story of a miracle performed by the Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī through his *bāb* Ibn Nuṣayr on the day of Nawrūz. The symbol of this holiday is a crown of myrtles or anemones (*akālīl adhrayūn/akālīl ās*) that commemorates these miraculous events. The Imām sent his *bāb* to resurrect one of his disciples in China. After leaving the Imām, Ibn Nuṣayr met a mysterious Indian mystic who gave him a crown of myrtles. When he put it on his head, he was able to transport himself immediately to any place he wished. This crown enabled Ibn Nuṣayr to go to China, resurrect the dead disciple, and return on the same day. On this holiday, believers may put myrtle crowns on their heads and ask for the fulfillment of their wishes.[409] The element of the crown of myrtle is a religious symbol for the cult of Mithra in Zoroastrianism and other Iranian sects.[410]

The mystical nature of the holiday of 17 Ādhār, which seems to be the only original Nuṣayrī festival, is characterized by the special prayer that al-Ṭabarānī composed containing the mysterious *fawātiḥ ḤM ʿSQ* at the beginning of the Sūrat al-Shūra (Qurʾān 42:1–2), and *KHYʿṢ* of Sūrat Maryam (Qurʾān 19:1) and *ʾLMṢ* of Sūrat al-Aʿrāf (Qurʾān 7:1). These enigmatic letters are followed by the divine name *ahya ashir*

[408] Ibid. We know of the existence of old monasteries called by these names in many regions inhabited by members of the sect in Syria, such as Mār Simʿān in Ṭarṭụs and Aleppo and Mār Jirjis in the same towns as well as in Ḥoms. However, the question of the existence of these monasteries as active Christian sanctuaries in the eleventh century demands further study.

[409] *MA*, pp. 180–186. See the same tradition in the source: *AAN*, pp. 98–101. The traversing of long distances without moving from one place to another is known in Islamic mysticism as *tayy al-arḍ* (folding up of earth) and is a virtue attributed to the Imāms in Shīʿism; see M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète: croyances et pratiques spirituelles dans l'islam shiʾite* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006), pp. 268–269.

[410] B. H. Springett, *Secret Sects of Syria and the Lebanon: A Consideration of their Origin, Creed and Religious Ceremonies* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1922), pp. 25–26, 28; J. Hackin, *Asiatic Mythology: A Detailed Description and Explanation of the Mythologies of All the Great Nations of Asia* (London: G. Harrap and Co., 1932), pp. 38–39.

ahya, which is the Hebrew *ehye asher ehye* (I am what I am, Exodus 3:14).[411] The comparison between the people of Israel and the true believers is also typical in Imāmī Shīʿī literature.[412] Since the contents of this holiday is the Nawrūz, it is followed in the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* by the Persian New Year.

10.11 *Nawrūz: The Persian New Year*

Nawrūz or No-Rūz (Persian, new day) is traditionally celebrated at the spring equinox on 21 March. In the Nuṣayrī calendar it is fixed on 4 Nīsān (equivalent to March/April) of the solar calendar. The fact that this holiday, like the previous one, is not located on the Muslim calendar but is fixed in the seventh month of a Babylonian/Hebrew calendar (and the first month of the Jewish biblical year) is confusing. Al-Ṭabarānī explains that this holiday takes place on the first day of the Persian year in the month of Favardīn Māh (the first month in the Persian calendar) when the Persian kings traditionally wore a crown of myrtles on their heads and the people sprinkled water on each other, a well known tradition still prevalent today.[413] This doubling of the date for Nawrūz is confusing and it is possible that the eventual date of this festival changed over the course of time. The source for the mystical meaning of the day is al-Khaṣībī, who explains that the divinity appeared in the form of the Persian kings in the *qubba al-Fārisiyya*. Thus, on this holiday, the Nuṣayrīs are asked to read al-Khaṣībī's poem *Akālīl quds* (crowns of holiness).[414] They also have to read another tradition concerning the miraculous transport of Ibn Nuṣayr with the help of the crown of myrtles. In this case he is transported to India (Sind) to resurrect another dead believer of the Imām by sprinkling water on his body.[415] This last tradition corresponds to the Zoroastrian doctrine of sprinkling water as a symbol of the resurrection of the dead after Ahura Mazda's triumph over Ahrimān, or the victory of good over evil.[416] In

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[411] *MA*, p. 186 in Arabic letters: عسق كهيعص المص حم

[412] See, for example, in *HUA*, p. 31 and *MA*, p. 204.

[413] See an explanation concerning the Persian New Year, and its celebration in the Muslim world, in R. Levy and C. E. Bosworth, "Nawrūz", *EI*[2] VII (1993), p. 1047.

[414] *MA*, pp. 188–191. See the *Akālīl quds*, in *DKH*, fol. 56a–64b.

[415] *MA*, pp. 192–195.

[416] Concerning the meaning of Nawrūz in Zoroastrianism see, for example, M. Boyce, "Iranian festivals", in E. Yarshater (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 798–800; M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians:*

general, the Nuṣayrīs show great respect towards the Persians to whom, according to their doctrine, the divinity was revealed before the Arabs. According to the Nuṣayrīs, it is due to the sins of the Persians that the divinity was veiled to them and appeared among the Arabs.[417]

At Persian New Year, the Nuṣayrīs study the *bāṭin al-Nawrūz* (mystical meaning of the New Year), based on Mufaḍḍal's teaching. According to the latter, the Imām Jaʿfar taught that this day's importance was "forgotten by the Arabs and remembered by the Persians", a phrase repeated several times in the long *Nawrūz* chapter in the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*. The Imām reminded his disciples that this day commemorates a series of important events, such as the stabilization of Noah's Ark, Abraham's destruction of his father's idols, Solomon's crowning by David, the illusionary crucifixion of Jesus, and the day of the *bayʿa* (oath of allegiance) of Ghadīr Khumm. At the end of time it will be the day when the *mahdī* will kill the *dajjāl* (triumph of good over evil; compare this with the struggle of Ahura Mazda and Ahrimān).[418] In order to remind the Arabs of Nawrūz, the Imām Jaʿfar is said to have worn a crown of anemones, asking his believers to give charity and explaining the symbol of the resurrecting water. He told his disciples that Nawrūz is based on a Persian tradition of pouring water on fire, as a symbol for the *maʿnā*'s personification in the form of Shervīn and his resurrection of the dead. The dead were resurrected wearing shining anemones. This event was commemorated by the Persian custom of pouring water on graves (*nawāwīs*, sing. *nāwūs*), wearing the crown of anemones, and their tradition of fire burning that represents the light of resurrection.[419] Apart from the sanctity of fire, a well-known element of Zoroastrianism, other components of this strange tradition need explanation. Shervīn is Anushīrvān (Persian, the eternal), the title of the Sassanid king Khusraw I (d. 579), considered a just

Their Religious Beliefs and Practices (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 129–130; ibid., *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), pp. 108–110.

[417] According to this tradition, the punishment of the Persians is due to the sins of the Sassanian king Khusraw II who is accused of arrogance, hostility to the Prophet Muḥammad, and of interfering in Zoroastrian theological matters. See *MA*, p. 210; M. M. Bar-Asher, "The Iranian component of the Nuṣayrī religion", *Journal of Persian Studies* 41 (2003), pp. 217–219.

[418] *MA*, pp. 195–200.

[419] Ibid., p. 206–208. Concerning the doctrine of resurrection in Zoroastrianism, see S. A. Kapadia, *The Teachings of Zoroaster and the Philosophy of the Parsi Religion* (Kila, Mont.: Kessinger, 1998 [reprint]), pp. 52–53; M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 236–237.

ruler.[420] The creation of life as a result of the mixture of fire and water exists in Zervanism, a branch of Zoroastrianism, according to which fire represents the male and water the female; when they mingled they created the cosmos. In this doctrine, the fire represents Ohrmazd/Ahura Mazda the good god, and water stands for Ahrimān the evil god.[421] This possible source of inspiration for the Nuṣayrīs may also explain their anti-feminine tendency.[422]

An earlier epistle, al-Khaṣībī's *Fiqh al-risāla al-rāstbāshiyya*, which seems to be one of al-Ṭabarānī's main sources, provides a better understanding of the meaning of the resurrecting water. Here, al-Khaṣībī explains that on 4 Nīsān there occurred the famous miracle of the resurrection of the dry bones that God showed to the prophet Ezekiel, who is presented as one of the personifications of the *ism*. Ezekiel was ordered by the *maʿnā* to pour water on the dead bodies of the people of Israel, an act that gave them life and purified their souls from sin. Although the source of this tradition is the book of Ezekiel (35:25–26;

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420 See details in J. S. Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 172–175. Concerning the preservation of Khusraw's testament in Arabic literature, see C. E. Bosworth, "The Persian impact on Arabic literature", in A. F. Landon (ed.), *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 488.

421 R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1972), pp. 77–78.

422 The anti-feminine nature of Nuṣayrī religion is reflected in many aspects of their doctrine. The masculine appellation of Fāṭima as Fāṭir is a typical example. According to one source, on the night of mid-Shaʿbān, men cleanse their bodies as a symbol of their denunciation of those who associate feminity with Fāṭima; see *KBS*, p. 265. Another reason for the Nuṣayrī anti-feminine attitude is the association of women with evil and guile throughout history. The main examples are the calamities caused by Eve and the wives of Noah and Lot. Transmigration into women is considered a punishment for men. See *HAD*, p. 151. Nevertheless, unlike sinners who transmigrate into animals with no chance for regret, pious and obedient women transmigrate into men. See *HIF*, p. 98; *HAD*, pp. 149–150. In the *Umm al-kitāb*, the rebelling angel ʿAzāzīl and his demons turn into beautiful women in order to tempt the angels to sin (compare with the Bible, *Genesis* 6:2–4). According to the *Haft wa-'l-aẓilla*, the women were all created from sins of the devil. See Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī 'l-Islām*, pp. 128, 173. This anti-feminism can also be traced in early Ismāʿīlism in a tradition concerning a feminine aspect of the divinity called *kūnī* (be!, feminine form of the *kun* of the creation), which was responsible for the original sin in the world of light. This tradition was preserved in a rare treatise by the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī* (propagandist) Abū ʿĪsā al-Murshid (tenth century). See S. M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Leiden: Brill, 1983), pp. 3–29 (Arabic text pp. 7–16). See also H. Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. M. Bonner (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 17.

36:1–14), while it is only hinted at in the Qurʾān (al-Baqara [2]: 343), the miracle of the dry bones is explained in Arabic by most of the Muslim commentaries on this last verse.[423]

Another tradition that is read at Nawrūz concerns a strange description of the *qibāb al-Fārisiyya* (Persian cycles of time), based on anonymous epistles (*rasāʾil*, sing. *risāla*) that al-Ṭabarānī received from a certain group of *ahl al-tawḥīd*, but about which he gives no details. These epistles divide the Persian cycles into four layers or generations (*ṭabaqāt*, sing. *ṭabaqa*) called by the names of Bahmān (the Persian Vohu Mana, the Good Thought of the Avesta):[424] *al-Bahmāniyya al-kubrā* (great Bahmān), *al-Bahmāniyya al-ʿuẓmā* (immense Bahman), *al-Bahmāniyya al-ḥamrā* (red Bahmān) and *al-Bahmāniyya al-bayḍāʾ* (white Bahmān). The list of the *ashkhāṣ* of each layer leaves no doubt as to the Zoroastrian inspiration of the anonymous epistles, as for example the name of Hormūz (Ahura Mazda) as well as legendary and famous Persian kings from antiquity to the Sassanian period.[425] Al-Ṭabarānī himself explains that these epistles contain the explanation of "the Persian religions from ancient times".[426] The explicit appearance of a Zoroastrian or quasi-Zoroastrian text in the most important book of holidays of the Nuṣayrī religion demands further study concerning the influence of Iranian religions on Nuṣayrism.

At Nawrūz, the Nuṣayrīs are asked to read the traditional saying that the celebration of this day was held in the house of Ibn Nuṣayr in Basra. During the celebration, Ibn Nuṣayr is said to have revealed the betrayal of Isḥāq al-Aḥmar and his group soon after he told his disciples about the people who betrayed Moses rather than the seventy people who were loyal to him after the sin of the Golden Calf (Qurʾān, al-Aʿrāf [7]: 155).[427]

423 See, for example, B. M. Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis* (London/New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 250–252.

424 Concerning Bahmān, see Bar-Asher, "The Iranian component of the Nuṣayrī religion", p. 222; bibliography p. 226 note 66.

425 Bar-Asher, "The Iranian component of the Nuṣayrī religion", pp. 221–222. Most of these persons can be found in the famous *Shahnameh* of Firdawsī, who was a contemporary of al-Ṭabarānī.

426 *MA*, pp. 209–210. The name of Hormūz also appears in the version of *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* 3, pp. 390–391; here, some names of Persian kings, which were impossible to reconstruct in the original manuscripts of Strothmann, can be completed. However, the *Silsila* version seems to contain many printing errors in this part of the book in particular.

427 Ibid., pp. 203–205.

The chapter on Nawrūz in *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* is the last in the book. It is also the longest, since it contains two other holidays, the "Great Thursday" and the Equinox of Mihrajān.

10.12 *Yawm al-Khamīs al-Kabīr: the holiday of "Great Thursday"*

As Strothmann explains in his introduction to his critical edition of the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, "Great Thursday" was a Byzantine holiday on the Thursday that precedes Easter, and its date and contents were altered in Nuṣayrism.[428] In the Nuṣayrī calendar this holiday is celebrated together with Nawrūz. Its content has nothing to do with Christianity and was completely replaced by Iranian symbols. The members of the sect are asked to read a tradition of Jannān al-Junbulānī, transmitted from his master, the *yatīm* Muḥammad ibn Jundab, and in his turn from Ibn Nuṣayr. According to this account, Ibn Nuṣayr explained that the mystical meaning of fire is the resurrection of the dead. The sacred fire appears in every cycle. For example, in the *qubba al-Ādamiyya* (the cycle of Adam) it appeared in the sacrifice of Abel, in the *qubba al-Mūsawiyya* (the cycle of Moses) it was in the burning bush from where God spoke to Moses, and in the *qubba al-Muḥammadiyya* (the cycle of Muḥammad) it was the testing of Ibn Saba's belief, when ʿAlī ordered that he be burned. After this explanation, Ibn Nuṣayr asked his followers to perform a ritual with water and *ʿabd al-nūr* (the special wine for mystic sessions), in which they pour water on their faces and pray to be forgiven for their sins and be saved from the *aḍdād*.[429]

Although Christian symbols were completely excluded, there are some traces or hints of the original "Great Thursday", also called "Holy Thursday". In Christianity this holiday takes place on the Thursday before Easter, to note the day on which the Last Supper of Jesus was held. In Christianity "Great Thursday" commemorates Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples and his betrayal by Judas. These two elements may be hinted at in the instruction of Ibn Nuṣayr that the face be washed and in the tradition regarding the betrayal of Isḥāq al-Aḥmar.

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[428] R. Stothmann, "Maimun Ibn el-Kasim von Tiberias um 968–1035: Festkalender der Nusairier. Grundlegendes Lehrbuch im syrischen Alawitenstaat", *Der Islam* 27 (1946), pp. 5–6.

[429] *MA*, pp. 212–220.

10.13 *Mihrajān: the holiday of the autumn equinox*[430]

In the Nuṣayrī calendar, the autumn equinox was fixed on 16 Tishrīn al-Awwal (October), instead of the original Zoroastrian date of 16 Mihr (the seventh month of the Persian calendar). Its content is identical to that of Nawrūz, since for the Nuṣayrīs, Mihrajān and the Nawrūz represent the two appearances of the *maʿnā* to the Persians every year in the *qubba al-Fārisiyya*.[431] The Nuṣayrīs' celebration of these two holidays preserves some Zoroastrian symbols, such as the names of gods and kings, but cannot be considered as a continuation of the original Iranian religion. Nothing is left of the original cult of Mithra in Mihrajān. The Nuṣayrī celebration of Nawrūz and Mihrajān seems to reflect the renaissance of these Iranian festivals in Shīʿī garb. It should be explained at this point that these two festivals had already been officially recognized by the ʿAbbāsid Empire at a time when Iranian culture and beliefs were mingled with a strong Shīʿī influence.

During the period of the creation of Nuṣayrism, two processes reached their peak: the Persianization of the Muslim empire (under the Buyids in particular) and the Islamization of Persian culture (especially through Shīʿī doctrine), or its Arabization by translation of Persian literature into Arabic.[432] In the prayer composed by al-Ṭabarānī for Mihrajān, he uses words in Persian mixed with Arabic phrases: *Yā Nowbahār!* (Persian, Oh Early Spring!) *zīnhār!* (protection!) *be-Bahmān* (by the Vohu Mana) *al-azalī bi-'l-ẓuhūr al-kanahwarī* (Arabic, the eternal with the appearance in the form of clouds) *wa-Rūzbeh al-salsalī* (Salmān's personification as Rūzbeh) *be-mōbedh al-mōbadhān* (Persian, by the supreme judge).[433] In the same prayer there is also a hint of the enigmatic Persian *Umm al-kitāb*, when al-Ṭabarānī praises the *maʿnā* with the unusual expression *sabbūḥ qaddūs* (the most praised and holy),

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430 See general explanations of this festival and its celebration by the Muslims, in J. Calmard, "Mihragān", *EI*², VII (1993), pp. 15–20.

431 *MA*, p. 10.

432 E. Yarshater, "The Persian presence in the Islamic world", in R. G. Hovannisian and G. Sabagh (eds.), *The Persian Presence in the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 4–125; Y. Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), p. 196; Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, pp. 159–160.

433 *MA*, pp. 224–225. *mōbedh mōbadhān* is the title of the highest judge in Sassanian culture, equivalent to the Arabic *qāḍī 'l-quḍāt*. As for its religious use in Mazdakism as a divine title, the cult of Khusraw, who appears among the Nuṣayrī divine personifications (for example in *MA*, p. 211), is also a Mazdean characteristic. See M. Guidi and M. Morony, "Mazdak", *EI*² VI (1991), p. 951.

which is also repeated in the text of Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh.[434] Nevertheless, the *Umm al-kitāb* does not refer to the two Persian equinoxes. Al-Ṭabarānī concludes his book with a second prayer for Mihrajān, in which the Nuṣayrīs ask God to punish the infidels with eternal transmigrations of their souls and to grant his believers crowns of light on their heads and to return to the world of light. This last prayer contains a section in which al-Ṭabarānī praises God, referring to each of his merits in alphabetical order.[435]

The following tables sum up the Nuṣayrī holidays, based on their complex double lunar and solar calendar system, according to the order of the *sana al-Khasībiyya*.

Lunar Calendar

Date	Holiday	Original contents	Nuṣayrī significance
Month of Ramaḍān	*Ramaḍān*	Month of fast; revelation of the Qurʾān.	Month of silence of ʿAlī's father and John the Baptist's father. Every night represents a Nuṣayrī saint.
1 Shawwāl	*ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*	Break of the fast of *Ramaḍān*.	The emanation of Muḥammad from the *maʿnā*; the abolition of the *taqiyya* at the end of time.
10–13 Dhū 'l-Ḥijja	*ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā*	The sacrifice of Ismāʿīl.	The *habṭa*; the end of time and return of the *mahdī* to maintain justice.
18 Dhū 'l-Ḥijja	*ʿĪd al-Ghadīr*	Nomination of ʿAlī as successor of the Prophet Muḥammad in Ghadīr Khumm.	Declaration of the divinity of ʿAlī; appearance of ʿAlī on the last day in Ghadīr Khumm to punish the first three caliphs.

[434] *MA*, p. 223 line 8, compare with *UK*, fol. 22a, 46a, 124b, 144b, 152a, 189a; Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī 'l-Islām*, pp. 95, 96, 105, 135. See this expression in *KHC*, fol. 10b. The blessing *sabbūḥ qaddūs* is used in Imāmī literature as that of the angels praising God while surrounding his throne; see, for example, al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 26, pp. 87. In *Umm al-kitāb* every mystic who hears the divine Imāms' explanation declares that: "Indeed ʿAlī and Muḥammad are *sabbūḥ qaddūs*".

[435] *MA*, pp. 225–228.

(*cont.*)

Date	Holiday	Original contents	Nuṣayrī significance
21 Dhū ʾl-Ḥijja	*ʿĪd al-Mubāhala*	Conversion of the Christians of Najrān to Islam after their leader was impressed by the prayer of the *ahl al-bayt*.	Conversion of the Christians of Najrān after they understood the divine nature of ʿAlī, Muḥammad and Salmān.
29 Dhū ʾl-Ḥijja	*ʿĪd al-Firāsh*	The day ʿAlī sacrificed himself by replacing Muḥammad in his bed the night the latter was supposed to be murdered by the Meccans.	Identical to Imāmī tradition, except for the prayer to the divine ʿAlī.
10 Muḥarram	*Yawm ʿĀshūr(āʾ)*	Mourning of the martyrdom of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī in Karbalāʾ.	Docetic doctrine maintains that Ḥusayn's death was only apparent, thus mourning is forbidden. The same applies to Jesus who was sacrificed only in appearance.
9 Rabīʿ al-Awwal	*Maqtal Dulām*	A popular (not formal) Shīʿī festival of the death of Caliph ʿUmar.	Day of celebration of all the demonic leaders in history such as: Pharaoh, Goliath and ʿUmar.
15 Shaʿbān	*Laylat Niṣf Shaʿbān*	A night of divine blessing, in which ʿAlī used to spend the night reading from the Qurʾān and praying.	Spiritual *ziyāra* (pilgrimage replaced by a prayer) to Ḥusayn and to al-Khaṣībī; spiritual *ziyāra* of Ibn Nuṣayr and the five holy *ahl al-Bayt*; vision of Salmān of ʿAlī's prophecy of the night of the Last Judgment.

Solar Calendar

Date	Holiday	Original contents	Nuṣayrī significance
17 Ādhār (March)	*al-Sābiʿ ʿAshar min Ādhār*	______________	Celebration in honor of Ibn Nuṣayr.
4 Nīsān (end March-April) / Favardīn Māh 1	*Nawrūz* (Zoroastrianism)	Persian New Year, vernal equinox.	Commemoration of the *maʿnā*'s appearances in the *qubba al-Fārisiyya*.
Yawm al-Khamīs al-Kabīr (the same day as *Nawrūz*)	Great Thursday/ Holy Thursday (Christianity)	Thursday before the Last Supper of Jesus (Easter).	The appearance of the *maʿnā* in fire.
16 Tishrīn al-Awwal (October)	*Mihrajān* (Zoroastrianism)	Persian Festival of Mithra, autumnal equinox.	Same contents as that of *Nawrūz*.
24/25 Kānūn al-Awwal (December)	*Laylat al-Mīlād* (Christianity)	Birth of Jesus.	Docetic birth of Jesus.

Nuṣayrī sources give several explanations for the fact that the calendar contains twelve months. The most important tradition cites Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar, who explains that the twelve months, like the twelve hours of the day, represent the twelve Imāms.[436] Another tradition explains that the twelve months represent the twelve sons of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (the Prophet Muḥammad's grandfather) and the four holy months (of the ḥajj: Dhū 'l-Qaʿda, Dhū 'l-Ḥijja, Muḥarram and Rajab) correspond to the four children of the Prophet (who did not survive).[437]

Also interesting are the Nuṣayrī explanations for the meaning of the word *ʿīd* (holiday). All the explanations to be found are given by al-Jillī, who was the first to organize the sect's calendar. In his *Bāṭin al-ṣalāt*, he uses the root of the word, ʿ.w.d (*ʿāda* or *aʿāda*, to return). Thus, he replaces the word *ʿīd* by a parallel, the word *rajʿa*, i.e. the return of the *mahdī* at the end of time. In other words, all the holidays represent the same apocalyptic expectation of the *muwaḥḥidūn*.[438] Al-Jillī continues

436 *IM*, pp. 251–253.
437 *MKH*, p. 196.
438 *KBS*, p. 253.

his discussion with a more complex explanation for the same root "to return", which is that every holiday represents the return of the appearance of the divinity in the form of one of the *ashkhāṣ* in order to give the believers a chance to return (*iʿāda*) to the state before the *yawm al-aẓilla* and their fall into the material world.[439] In his *Risāla al-Masīḥiyya*, al-Jillī explains that the word *ʿīd* is a parallel of *ʿawda*, which means "return", since Jesus returned to his believers after his occultations (*ghaybāt*) in the form of each of his twelve Apostles and will return at the end of time.[440] The apocalyptic doctrine is repeated in al-Khaṣībī's *Dīwān*. It is referred to in typical Shīʿī terms: "the white return" (*al-rajʿa al-bayḍāʾ*), "the great return" (*al-rajʿa al-kubrā*) and "the day of resurrection" (*yawm al-qiyāma*).[441]

At the end of time, after the return of the *mahdī* to avenge the murder of Ḥusayn (even if only in appearance) and to kill all the enemies of the Imāms (the *aḍdād* and their followers), the Nuṣayrīs will return to their original state, namely they will return to the world of light. Until then, the mystics will concentrate their efforts to elevate their souls to a higher spiritual level. Some of them, who purify their souls, will reach the world of light even before the Day of Judgment.

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[439] Ibid., p. 254.
[440] *RM*, pp. 301–302.
[441] *DKH*, fol. 10a, 25b–27b, 39b, 40a, 86b, 87b, 93a–94b.

CHAPTER THREE

IDENTITY BETWEEN SUNNA AND SHĪʿA

The attitude of Sunnīs and Shīʿīs towards the religious identity of the Nuṣayrī sect in Middle Ages has not yet been studied or examined in its larger historical context.[1] This subject is of tremendous importance for the understanding of the Shīʿī–Sunnī ideological conflict as well as for the understanding of background interests in modern Middle Eastern politics. Since the ʿAlawīs have become a leading group in Syria, it is possible to talk today about a Shīʿī–ʿAlawī–Sunnī triangle as a prominent political axis, involving struggles and negotiations between many countries in the Middle East (mainly Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Saudi Arabia). However, during most of the medieval period, the Nuṣayrīs were a small minority in Syria and Lebanon, with very limited involvement in the turbulent political events of their region. Their perpetual state of war and instability raised suspicions against the strange Shīʿī sect located in a territory inhabited by a Sunnī majority. Moreover, this small minority was ruled for most of the time by Sunnī dynasties (ʿAbbasids, Seljuks, Ayyubids and finally Ottomans) when this western part of the Muslim world was in permanent conflict with the Fāṭimid–Ismāʿīlī empire in Egypt and North Africa as well as with the Shīʿī empires in the east (Buyids, Safavids and others in Persia).

The brief era of Shīʿī dominance (mid-tenth century to mid-eleventh century) in Iraq and Syria was a crucial period for the creation of the Nuṣayrī identity. This identity is based on the personality of al-Khaṣībī, who served as an example of the right believer, and who used *taqiyya* in a way that would enable the sect to survive, and later on even to ensure the protection of strong allies and the legitimization of some of the leaders of the sect by the Imāmī Shīʿī authorities in modern times. However, in the orthodox Shīʿī world, crystallized after the *ghayba*, a debate was developing as to the question of whether the Nuṣayrīs were

[1] This chapter is partly based on my doctoral dissertation, *Les Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs entre Sunna et Shīʿa—refus et acceptation selon les sources arabes médiévales et modernes* (Paris: Sorbonne, 2005) in which this issue was discussed for the first time.

to be considered a dangerous, excommunicated group of Ghulāt or a branch of Shīʿism and an important potential ally in Syria.

In the study of the identity of the Nuṣayrīs between Shīʿism and Sunnism, three major factors should be considered: the *taqiyya* of al-Khaṣībī among the Nuṣayrīs, the suspicions of the Sunnīs that the members of this sect were collaborating with their enemies, and the Shīʿī internal polemic concerning their attitude towards the sect.

1. *Two Shīʿī attitudes*

In this chapter, an attempt is made to prove that the Shīʿī attitude towards the Nuṣayrīs is not homogeneous, since there are two coexistent judgments concerning the Ghulāt in Imāmī literature. The most prominent attitude is a negative one. When asked about the Ghulāt, Imāmī scholars explain that the Imāms had declared their excommunication (*barāʾa*) and usually add their own negative opinion concerning them. Although the Ghulāt appear in the late Imāmī literature as a marginal excommunicated group of heretical Shīʿīs, this image does not seem to correspond to historical truth. It may be claimed that the Ghulāt were a group belonging to an inner circle of the Imāms.

1.1 *Al-Majlisī's excommunication of the Ghulāt*

The most prominent example of the negative Shīʿī attitude towards the Ghulāt is the view of the famous Imāmī scholar Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1699 or 1111/1700), a leading figure in the conservative line of the Shīʿa. Although the focus here is on medieval writings, and al-Majlisī lived at the end of the Safavid period, his famous *Biḥār al-anwār* represents a summary of the medieval literature. In his chapter on the "refutation of extremism" (*nafy al-ghulūw*), he cites medieval Imāmī scholars, mainly the two Iraqis Abū ʿAmr al-Kashshī (d. 340/951) and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067). Their opinion is that the Ghulāt are heretics (*kuffār*, sing. *kāfir*) and polytheists (*mushrikūn*), that the Imāms had declared their excommunication (*barāʾa*), and that they are all doomed to burn in hell.[2] The Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is cited saying:

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[2] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 25, pp. 265–266, 304, 342.

> Warn your young people against the Ghulāt so that the latter will not corrupt them, since the Ghulāt are the worst of God's creation, reducing God's might and considering his servants as God. In the name of God! The Ghulāt are worse than the Jews and Christians and the Magians [Zoroastrians] who are polytheists. Then he [Jaʿfar] said: if a *ghālī* were to return to us we would not accept him, but if a *muqaṣṣir* [deficient Shīʿī] were to join us we would accept him. Then he was asked: Why is that so, O son of the messenger of God? He replied: The *ghālī* usually neglects prayer, almsgiving, fasting and the pilgrimage [pillars of Islam] and he can never get rid of his habits and return to the worship of God, while when he knows about the obligation, the *muqaṣṣir* obeys it.[3]

Al-Majlisī's resentment of the Ghulāt derives mainly from the tendency of these mystics to neglect the *ẓāhir*, the obligations of Islam. Hence, the neglect of the *bāṭin* by the *muqaṣṣir* seems to him less problematic. According to al-Majlisī, the *ghulūw* is alien to Islam and derives from Christianity and Judaism. The view of Jesus, a prophet in Islam, as God himself, is considered the view of a Christian *ghulūw*. According to Shīʿī tradition, ʿAlī declared: "I repudiate the Ghulāt as Jesus' repudiation (*barāʾa*) of the Christians".[4] The Jewish *ghulūw* is considered more dangerous, since it penetrated into Islam through a convert. According to a Shīʿī tradition, a Jew called ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ, an important *ghālī* and a Nuṣayrī saint, who was of Yemeni origin and had converted to Islam, translated his exaggerated admiration for the biblical Joshua into an exaggerated admiration of the Muslim ʿAlī. ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ explained that ʿAlī is the *waṣī* of Muḥammad, his spiritual successor, as Joshua was to Moses. Ibn Sabaʾ was the first to claim that the rule of ʿAlī was a religious duty (*farḍ*), not only a political claim, the first to curse ʿAlī's enemies and declare their heresy, and the first to deny ʿAlī's death. Ironically, the "exaggerated" claims of Ibn Sabaʾ eventually became the fundamental doctrines in Imāmī Shīʿism. Aware of this fact, al-Kashshī and al-Nawbakhtī both write at the end of their biography of Ibn Sabaʾ: "This is the reason why those who deny the Shīʿa claim that the source of their belief is taken from

[3] Ibid., pp. 265–266. The claims concerning the Jews and Christians here contradict those later in the same chapter, which say that the *ghulāt* are worse than Jews and Christians since they are monotheists and the *ghulāt* are polytheists. See ibid., p. 304.

[4] Ibid., p. 266.

Judaism [*aṣl al-rafḍ* (al-Kashshī: *al-tashayyuʿ wa-ʾl-rafḍ*) *maʾkhūdh min al-yahūdiyya*]".[5]

The Nuṣayrī al-Jillī also dedicated a long paragraph to attacking the doctrine of *tafwīd* (delegation), which is prominent in Ghulāt thought. According to this doctrine, God delegated his powers to the Imāms to turn them into superhuman or even divine persons. In Nuṣayrī theology, the understanding of the *tafwīḍ* is an intermediate stage in the spiritual progress of the mystic between *taqṣīr* and *tawḥīd*, i.e. between the understanding of only the exoteric religion and the understanding of the esoteric meaning.[6] Modaressi assumes that there was an offshoot called Mufawwiḍa among the Iraqi Shīʿa of the post-*ghayba* period (tenth century) who believed that God had delegated some of his powers to the Imāms. According to his hypothesis, this group was opposed by the *muqaṣṣira* advocating the *ẓāhir* only and insisting that the Imāms were human beings.[7] Al-Majlisī's view represents a continuation of the conservative thought of the *muqaṣṣira*. He rejects the Ghulāt's fundamental concept of the divine Imām and Docetism:

> It is our view concerning the Prophet and the Imāms, peace be upon them, that some of them were killed by the sword and some were poisoned and that it has happened to them in reality and it was not by illusion (*mā shubbiha amruhum*)...those who claim it do not belong to our religion in any sense.[8]

As to the term *tafwīḍ*, instead of rejecting it, al-Majlisī limits its meaning to the delegation of the ability to give the right commentary to God's words transmitted to the Prophet Muḥammad.[9] Al-Majlisī also stresses that no autonomy was given to the Imāms: "They permit [only] what God permits, and forbid only what he forbids and they do only what God asks them to do, because they are not more than respectable

[5] Ibid., p. 287; this version of al-Kashshī appears with more details in al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, pp. 22–23. See also M. G. Hodgson, "ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ", *EI*[2] I (1960), p. 51; W. F. Tucker, *Mahdis and Millenarians: Shīʿī Extremists in Early Muslim Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 9–19. The Nuṣayrīs define their religion as *rafḍ*, like the rest of the Shīʿīs; see, for example, *DMS*, pp. 44, 180 (*rafḍ li-ʾl-Sunna* = opposition to Sunnism).

[6] *FRR*, p. 114.

[7] Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, pp. 19–51. See an example of the mention of the two groups, in al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 25, pp. 336–337.

[8] Al-Majlisī, ibid., pp. 342–343.

[9] Ibid., p. 332.

human beings. They are able to know God's will, as do prophets, by inspiration (*waḥy*)".[10]

A harsh verdict appears at the end of the chapter:

> Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) explained: *ghulūw* in Arabic means to go beyond the limit and to deviate from the object. God said: "People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion and do not say concerning God what is wrong" (Qurʾān, al-Nisāʾ [4]: 170), so he forbade going beyond the limit concerning Jesus and warned them from deviating from what is said [in the holy book]. Hence he considered what the Christians believed to be *ghulūw*...and the Ghulāt pretending to be Muslims [*al-mutaẓāhirīna bi-ʾl-Islām*] are those who attributed divinity to the Imāms...and they are infidels led astray; the commander of the believers' [ʿAlī's] verdict was to kill them and to burn them in fire and the Imāms' verdict was that they are infidels and deviate from Islam.[11]

The verdict of al-Mufīd, the famous Imāmī scholar from the Buyid period, is backed by that of one of the four *sufarāʾ* (mediators), Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad, who cursed Ibn Nuṣayr in public:

> We have no need to judge them [the Ghulāt] and to clarify their matter since Abū Jaʿfar, may God have mercy upon him, [already] concluded concerning the *ghulūw* as follows: Know that the *ghulūw* concerning the Prophet and the Imāms is merely in the belief that they were Gods or God's assistants in the [ordering of] cults or the creation and the [control of the] welfare of people, or the belief that God is incarnated in them or united himself with them, or the belief that they knew the absent [*al-ghayb*, one of God's names, or simply "esoteric matters"] without any divine inspiration, or the belief that the Imāms were prophets or the belief in the transmigration of the soul from one of them to another, or the belief that their knowledge dismisses them from all obligations and they are not obligated to neglect the sins. All these beliefs are [considered] atheism [*ilḥād*], heresy [*kufr*] and deviation from the religion [of Islam]...[Abū Jaʿfar concludes with the same order of the Imāms to kill them].[12]

This verdict cited by al-Majlisī concerns the Nuṣayrīs as well, since they appear previously among the other Ghulāt in the same chapter of "refutation of *ghulūw*", citing al-Kashshī:

> A man called Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Namīri/Numayrī from Basra claimed that God did not appear except in this era and that he is only

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[10] Ibid., p. 339; see also *HK*, p. 444.
[11] Al-Majlisī, ibid., pp. 324–325. See also the same verdict in ibid., p. 342.
[12] Ibid., p. 336.

> ʿAlī and the small group [*shirdhima*] of the Nuṣayrīs belongs to him. They are a group [believing in] antinomianism [*ibāḥiyya*] who neglected the obligations and laws and permitted what is forbidden and prohibited. One of their claims is: the Jews are right although we are not from them and that the Christians are right although we do not belong to them.[13]

Although al-Majlisī's severe judgment is not included in a *fatwā*, it can be considered as one representing the view of the conservative Akhbārī branch of Shīʿism, propagating the reliance on the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth as the only sources of law and rejecting independent interpretation (*ijtihād*). The accusations against the Ghulāt in general, and the Nuṣayrīs in particular, contain the most severe terms of heresy[14] and may give the impression that they were totally rejected by the Shīʿa. However, it seems that al-Majlisī's choice of citations from the medieval scholars was selective, since another view concerning the Nuṣayrīs existed in the Middle Ages, and continues to have influence on Shīʿī thought until today.

1.2 *An indulgent Shīʿī view concerning the Nuṣayrīs*

As already noted, the view of al-Majlisī does not represent the Shīʿa as a whole, but only the conservative line of the *muqaṣṣira* and later the Akhbārīs. As is to be expected, a less severe judgment is maintained by the other offshoot of the Shīʿa, those who legitimize the *bātin* and the *taʾwīl* or at least permit the *ʿulamāʾ* to allow the use of *ijtihād* concerning the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth. Since this branch, called Uṣūlī, became much stronger than the Akhbārī in modern Shīʿism, it merits special attention. The famous heresiographical book *Firaq al-Shīʿa* (sects of the Shīʿa) by al-Nawbakhtī (d. 310/922) reflects a different view from that of al-Majlisī. The very title of the book reflects the idea that there are many sects that deserve the title "Shīʿa", an opinion criticized by the publishers of the book in Lebanon (1984).[15] For al-Nawbakhtī,

[13] Ibid., 285–286.

[14] See an explanation concerning the various terms for heresy in B. Lewis, *Islam in History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East* (new ed., Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 2002), pp. 283–294.

[15] See the introduction by the Lebanese editor and the publisher at the beginning of the book: al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, p. a and the preceding one, which has no number.

the schism is a normal and legitimate phenomenon in Shīʿism. At the beginning of his book he notes:

> The Shīʿī sects and others were divided as to the issue of the *imāma* [the question of who is the legitimate Imām] in every period after the death of each Imām and [even] when he was alive, since the Prophet Muḥammad died, and in the present book we mention what we have gathered concerning its sects [of the Shīʿa], their views [*ārāʾ*, sing. *raʾy*] and their polemic [*ikhtilāf*], as well as what we have not mentioned for reasons [*ʿilal*, sing. *ʿilla*] of their division and polemic.[16]

Al-Nawbakhtī informs us that after the death of the eleventh Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī the Shīʿa was divided into fourteen sects, and that the Imāmiyya (today the orthodox Shīʿism) was only one of them.[17] Even though al-Nawbakhtī considers only the Imāmiyya, to which he belongs, as the right group, his criticism of the other sects is very limited. When dealing with Ibn Nuṣayr, al-Nawbakhtī accuses him of adultery and deems his sect, the Namīriyya/Numayriyya, to be Ghulāt.[18] Nevertheless, al-Nawbakhtī never regards any of the sects as heretical (*kāfir*) or as atheist (*ilḥād*). As Muhammad Javad Mashkur notes in the introduction to his French translation of *Firaq al-Shīʿā*, "Nawbakhtī, like Shahrastānī, is content with loyally reporting the opinions of the different sects, and it is only very rarely that he calls down the divine curse upon those who wanted to elevate their leaders to the level of God".[19]

Mashkur's comparison between the attitude of al-Nawbakhtī and that of the Shīʿī[20] scholar Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), author of the famous *Milal wa-ʾl-niḥal*, is correct. In this book, the belief of the Nuṣayrīs regarding the Imāms as divine incarnations is presented as their theory (*qawl*), not as a heresy. In

[16] Ibid., p. 2.

[17] Ibid., pp. 96–112.

[18] Ibid., pp. 93–94.

[19] M. J. Mashkur, *Al-Nawbakhtī: Les sectes Shiites: Traduction annotée avec introduction* (2nd ed., Tehran: no publisher, 1980), p. 5.

[20] The identity of al-Shahrastānī is still difficult to determine. Ibn Taymiyya thought he was an Imāmī Shīʿī, but most of the Sunnī scholars identified him as an Ismāʿīlī who practiced *taqiyya* in order to avoid persecution. See the introduction to the French translation of al-Shahrastānī's book, D. Gimaret and G. Monnot (trans., intro., notes), *Shahrastani: Livre des religions et des sectes* (Paris: Peeters/Unesco, 1986), pp. 59–62; D. Steigerwald, "Al-Shahrastānī's contribution to medieval Islamic thought", in T. Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 265–266.

addition, he concludes his chapter with the phrase: "We have finished our discussion of Islamic sects", without excommunicating the Nuṣayrīs.[21] Gimaret and Monnot note that the tone of al-Shahrastānī is moderate. The latter presents the diverse doctrines of Islamic sects as theories or theses (*qawl*, pl. *aqwāl*/*madhhab* pl. *madhāhib*) and not as heresies or matters of defamation (*ḍalālāt*/*faḍāʾiḥ*), a typical Sunnī terminology. Al-Shahrastānī accuses the Ghulāt of confusion (*ḥayra*) but not of heresy (*kufr*).[22] If it is in doubt that al-Shahrastānī represents Imāmī Shīʿī thought because of his questionable identity, another example of an indulgent attitude towards the Nuṣayrīs may be used, that of an Imāmī religious authority, al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325). The view of al-Ḥillī, who is considered a pioneering medieval Uṣūlī thinker, is opposed to that of the Akhbārī al-Majlisī, as to the status of the Ghulāt.

The studies of Henri Laoust concerning pluralism in Islam[23] back the hypothesis concerning the existence of another attitude towards the Nuṣayrīs in Shīʿism that is more moderate. In his studies he uses the example of al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Ḥillī, an important Imāmī theologian, who succeeded in influencing the ruler of Persia, the Ilkhānid Oljeitu, to convert to Shīʿism and to declare Shīʿī Islam as the state's official religion at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The struggle between the Ilkhānate and the Mamlūks became, for a short time, a Shīʿī–Sunnī struggle (before the next Ilkhānid ruler converted to Sunnism). At the ruler's demand, al-Ḥillī wrote his *Minhāj al-karāma fī maʿrifat al-imāma*, which was refuted by the famous Mamlūk theologian Ibn Taymiyya in his *Minhāj al-sunna*. The polemic between these two scholars is relevant to this study. The attitude towards the Nuṣayrīs was one of the issues of controversy. While for Ibn Taymiyya the Nuṣayrīs were the worst heretics, for al-Ḥillī they were Muslim Shīʿīs who were to be condemned only for their exaggerated admiration of ʿAlī. This relative indulgence is explained by Laoust as an attempt by al-Ḥillī to unite "the big family of the Shīʿī diaspora". Laoust does not consider this attitude to be a real religious reconciliation between the Imāmiyya on one hand, and the Nuṣayriyya and other non-orthodox Shīʿī sects on the other, but rather a tactical need for their collabora-

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21 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-milal wa-ʾl-niḥal*, pp. 192–193.

22 Gimaret and Monnot, *Shahrastani*, pp. 44–45.

23 A collection of his articles on this subject were gathered in H. Laoust, *Pluralisme dans l'Islam* (Paris: Geuthner, 1983).

tion under Mamlūk rule.[24] Indeed, al-Ḥillī's *Khulāṣat al-aqwāl* demonstrates an extremely negative attitude concerning the founders of the Nuṣayrī sect. Ibn Nuṣayr is mentioned as a scholar who was cursed by the Imām ʿAlī al-Hādī,[25] and al-Khaṣībī is described as "possessing a corrupted theology, a liar, a holder of a cursed belief which should be rejected".[26] Nevertheless, another description of Ibn Nuṣayr appears elsewhere in the same book, where he is mentioned as being presented in the book of *ḍuʿafāʾ* (unreliable transmitters of Ḥadīth) of Ibn al-Ghadāʾirī (Imāmī scholar of the eleventh century) as the eponym of the Nuṣayrī sect, but is described as "one of the most respected men of Basra in knowledge" (*min afāḍil ahl al-Basra ʿilman*).[27] It is interesting that the Nuṣayrīs and their founders are condemned by al-Ḥillī but are never excluded from the Muslim community as they are by al-Majlisī. They are cursed but not declared heretics or atheists. The reason for this indulgence seems to be more complex than a tactical alliance against the Sunnī enemy.

1.3 *The ambivalent attitude towards the Ghulāt*

It is difficult to reach a decisive conclusion concerning the question of the difference between Mufawwiḍa and Muqaṣṣira and between the Uṣūlī and the Akhbārīs attitude towards the Nuṣayrīs. Although it seems that the Uṣūlī permission for *ijtihād* enables a more liberal view concerning mystical sects, a further study covering more sources should be undertaken. The indulgent attitude towards the Nuṣayrīs is perhaps not merely the result of the late Uṣūlī–Akhbārī conflict but also that of the special status of the Ghulāt in early Shīʿism.

The Imāmī ambivalence does not concern merely the Nuṣayrīs, but also the Ghulāt who preceded them. In his study of early Shīʿism, Leyakat Takim notes that in Imāmī literature there is an ambivalent attitude towards Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Juʿfī, a well-known *ghālī* from Kufa (and a Nuṣayrī saint). Some consider him an "extremist" and some a reliable transmitter of traditions. Shīʿī biographers even defend

[24] H. Laoust., "La critique du Sunnisme dans la doctrine d'al-Ḥillī", *REI* 34 (1966), pp. 58–59; "Les fondements de l'Imamat dans le *Minhāj* d'al-Ḥillī", *REI* 66 (1978), p. 318.

[25] Al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Ḥillī, *Khulāṣat al-aqwāl fī maʿrifat al-rijāl* (Qumm: Muʾassasat Nashr al-Faqāha, 1996), p. 410.

[26] Al-Ḥillī, *Khulāṣat al-aqwāl*, p. 339.

[27] Ibid., p. 405.

him against the Sunnī accusation of insanity by explaining that his behavior was a result of his practice of *taqiyya* in order to prevent his arrest by the Umayyad authorities.[28] Al-Ḥillī is content to describe Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb as a "cursed person" (*malʿūn*) and Mufaḍḍal as an unreliable transmitter (*ḍaʿīf*) who backed Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb but attacked the other Ghulāt. He cites al-Kashshī's condemnation and praise of Mufaḍḍal (*barāʾa* and *madḥ/thanāʾ*).[29] The ambivalence begins with the first *ghālī* ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ. According to Imāmī tradition, when ʿAlī ordered that Ibn Sabaʾ be burnt because he claimed the divinity of the Imām, his followers urged him to reconsider, saying: "Would you kill a person who propagates love for the family of the Prophet and loyalty to the Imāms and the denunciation (*barāʾa*) of your enemies?" ʿAlī then changed his decision and expelled him to al-Madāʾin.[30] This decision was merely symbolic, since it was difficult to excommunicate the Ghulāt who were the most zealous propagators of the Shīʿa. Al-Khaṣībī was not the first *ghālī* who was also considered an Imāmī authority. Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar, the most cited *ghālī* in the Nuṣayrī literature and a saint in their theology, appears in al-Majlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār* as an important Imāmī authority. For example, Mufaḍḍal is one of the witnesses to the transmission of the *waṣiyya* (spiritual testament to lead the community) from the Imām Jaʿfar to his son Mūsā ʾl-Kāẓim.[31] He is said to have received personal instructions from Jaʿfar in matters of medicine,[32] theology[33] and liturgy.[34] It is also mentioned that Jaʿfar ordered that Mufaḍḍal be cursed when he heard that he claimed the Imām's ability to control the welfare of people (*rizq*).[35] Like al-Ḥillī, al-Majlisī also accuses Mufaḍḍal of backing Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb.[36] It is interesting to note that al-Nawbakhtī does not mention Mufaḍḍal in his *Firaq al-Shīʿā*, a fact that indicates he did not consider him to be a *ghālī* at all.

[28] L. N. Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shiʿite Islam* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp. 163–179.
[29] Al-Ḥillī, *Khulāṣat al-aqwāl*, pp. 407, 429.
[30] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, p. 22.
[31] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 47, pp. 253, 348; vol. 48, pp. 15–17.
[32] Ibid., vol. 59, p. 259.
[33] Ibid., vol. 48, p. 22.
[34] Ibid., vol. 88, p. 200.
[35] Ibid., vol. 25, p. 301.
[36] Ibid., p. 323.

In his *taqiyya* al-Khaṣībī makes a clever use of Mufaḍḍal's mystical traditions, which he cites in his writings for his sect[37] and also of his orthodox traditions in the book dedicated to the Imāmī Ḥamdānids.[38]

The explanation for this odd ambivalence seems to be the awareness of the Imāmī scholars that the Ghulāt, whom they rejected as heretics after the *ghayba*, had been the main developers of theological ideas in the Shīʿa, such as the obligation to curse the first three Caliphs and the *ṣaḥāba* who rejected ʿAlī, the belief in the divine light transmitted from one Imām to his successor and that of the return of the Imām at the end of time (*rajʿa*). All these beliefs were originally considered as *ghulūw* but were later adopted by orthodox Shīʿism. Some beliefs of the Ghulāt were rejected but preserved in some circles that later became mystical sects, such as Shaykhism and Bahāʾism in nineteenth-century Persia.

Muḥammad Amir-Moezzi's work on early Shīʿism sheds light on the status of the Ghulāt. Basing his theory on early Imāmī sources, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* of al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 290/930) in particular, he concludes that the original Shīʿī community contained two circles, external and internal. The first was the mass of believers, the *ʿāmma*, initiated only in the exoteric religion, the *ẓāhir*. This external circle was not far from Sunnism in theological matters. The second was the inner circle, the exalted minority of the *khāṣṣa* who were close to the Imām, and who were initiated into the mystical knowledge, the *bāṭin*. In this internal circle the main ideas of the Shīʿa were shaped, based on the idea that the Imām possessed supernatural powers and shared mystical knowledge (*ʿilm*) with his close intimates.[39] This two-cycle structure was a means to preserve *taqiyya*. When someone from the inner circle exposed its secrets, the Imām cursed him not for his words, but for violating the *taqiyya*. In most cases, this condemnation did not involve excommunication, and some Ghulāt passed from the inner circle of an Imām to that of his successor (such as the passage of Ibn Nuṣayr from the circle of ʿAlī al-Hādī to that of Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī).[40]

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[37] See, for example, the tradition in which Jaʿfar is said to explain to Mufaḍḍal the levels of transmigration: *ARM*, pp. 22–23.

[38] *HK*, pp. 392–444.

[39] M. A. Moezzi, *Le guide divin dans le Shīʿisme originel: aux sources de l'ésotérisme en Islam* (Paris: Verdier, 1992), pp. 228–243, 305–306.

[40] Ibid., pp. 313–315.

A paragraph in the *Umm al-kitāb* backs the hypothesis that the Ghulāt were criticized for violating the *taqiyya* and not for the contents of their preaching. According to this paragraph, some known mystics, such as Jābir al-Juʿfī and Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh, claimed before the Imām al-Bāqir that Ibn Sabaʾ did not deserve his cruel death and that they believed in the same doctrines for which he was killed. Then al-Bāqir explained to them that Ibn Sabaʾ should not have revealed a secret that would be revealed only by the *mahdī* at the end of time.[41]

From this some important conclusions can be drawn. The Ghulāt were not a marginal group but a part of the inner circle of the Imām. The Ghulāt transmitted traditions directly from the Imām and preached in his name. Sometimes they claimed openly to have received esoteric knowledge from him and were accused of *ghulūw*. Some of the Ghulāt took a further step and claimed that they also received divine powers from him. They were then excommunicated and sometimes even put to death by the Sunnī authorities. After the *ghayba* there was a need to consolidate the Shīʿa in order to prevent the annihilation of the Shīʿī community that had been left without an Imām. The inner circle remained without its source of legitimacy, and its role in creating new ideas became unnecessary and even disruptive in the formation of a theology that would be adequate for the majority of the Shīʿīs, the *ʿāmma*. In this light we should understand the excommunication of the Namīriyya/Numayriyya and later of the Nuṣayriyya as part of the general rejection of the mystic groups during the creation of a moderate Imāmī Shīʿism. The Nuṣayrī leaders continued the work of the inner circle by developing and summing up the traditions of the mystics.

To conclude, two attitudes were developed towards the Nuṣayrīs. One attitude rejects them totally together with the rest of the Ghulāt, considering their mysticism to be a dangerous rival to Imāmī orthodoxy. Another attitude is more indulgent for theological as well as tactical reasons, knowing that the Ghulāt come from the same source as the Imāmiyya and share some mutual beliefs and the same history, and that as such, they can serve as useful political allies if needed. These interests were as relevant in late medieval history as they are still today.

[41] Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 96–98.

2. *The Sunnī* takfīr *against the Nuṣayrīs*

While it is possible to speak of two attitudes in Shīʿī thought, in Sunnī medieval literature there is conformity as to the total rejection of the Nuṣayrīs. The Sunnī scholars used *takfīr*, a declaration of their heresy (*kufr*), since Shīʿism was viewed as a problematic Islamic belief, and its extremist version, that of the Ghulāt, was considered completely unacceptable. The Shāfiʿī heresiographer ʿabd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), in his *Farq bayna ʾl-firaq*, considers the Nuṣayrīs, whom he calls by their old name Namīriyya/Numayriyya, heretics together with the rest of the Ghulāt, since "they believe in other Gods not in Allāh".[42] His main accusation is that the sect believes in the incarnation (*ḥulūl*) of God in Ibn Nuṣayr as well as in the five members of the Prophet's family: Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (the *ahl al-kisāʾ*),[43] a view that is in fact totally rejected in Nuṣayrī theology. Laoust explains that, as in the case of indulgence towards the Shīʿīs, the Sunnī attack also has political interests. The *Farq bayna ʾl-firaq* represents Sunnī restoration under Caliph al-Qādir (d. 422/1031) after the domination of the Shīʿī Buyids.[44] The hostility towards the Shīʿīs during the lifetime of ʿabd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī would intensify in the late Middle Ages (twelfth–fourteenth centuries) following the extremely violent activity of Shīʿī sects in Syria and Iran against the Sunnī authorities, particularly of the "Ḥashīshī" Niẓārī-Ismāʿīlīs. Contrary to historical truth, Shīʿīs were held to blame for the fall of the western Mediterranean coast and Jerusalem in particular into the hands of the Christian Crusaders.[45] Another typical Sunnī argument after the thirteenth century, this time based on historical fact, is the accusation against the Shīʿīs that they collaborated with the Mongols to destroy the ʿAbbāsid caliphate.[46] The peak of this anti-Shīʿī polemic is evident in the writings of Ibn Taymiyya, the well-known Sunnī Ḥanbalī scholar of the fourteenth century, whose attack against the Nuṣayrīs was part of a general *takfīr* of all the Shīʿī sects in Syria. Ibn Taymiyya represents the most severe Sunnī

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[42] ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna ʾl-firaq*, p. 239.

[43] Ibid., p. 242.

[44] H. Laoust, "La classification des sectes dans le *farq* dʾal-Baghdādī", *REI* 39 (1961), p. 58.

[45] Concerning the struggle of the Shīʿī Fāṭimid–Ismāʿīlī Empire in Egypt against the the Crusaders, see, for example, F. Daftary, *The Assassin Legend: Myths of the Ismaʾilis* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 66–67.

[46] For the historical events that confirm this accusation, see Halm, *Shiism*, p. 184.

attitude towards the Nuṣayrīs, which was not content with declaring them heretics, but also demanded their extermination.

2.1 *The* fatwā *of Ibn Taymiyya*[47]

The *fatwā* of Ibn Taymiyya was discussed earlier from a historical perspective. In this chapter the document itself and two other related documents are examined, as well as their significance to the Sunnī attitude towards the Nuṣayrī sect. Since the last translation of this document into English a century and a half ago by E. Salisbury (*JAOS*, 1851) suffered from many omissions and was criticized for its inaccuracy by St. Guyard, a new translation is offered here (see Appendix 8). St. Guyard's article concerning this *fatwā*, and containing its translation into French, dates from the end of the nineteenth century.[48] The Arabic text used by St. Guyard, which was taken from the manuscripts of the French Societé Asiatique, seems to be the most reliable Arabic source, since other versions of the same *fatwā* published later on were altered or touched, as explained below. The text contains two parts, an anonymous *istiftāʾ*, which is a judicial consultation, and a *fatwā*, a judicial decision by Ibn Taymiyya. The study of the two parts reveals considerable differences between them. The first part shows a great deal of knowledge of the Nuṣayrī religion, albeit superficial and inaccurate. However, this knowledge is not evident in Ibn Taymiyya's response.[49] Since other *fatwā*s of Ibn Taymiyya are dealt with later, *fatwā* (a) is treated as the main one.

(a)
istiftāʾ

> What is the view of the noble scholars the religious leaders about the Nuṣayriyya, may Allāh forgive them? How could they help to unveil the clear truth and oppress the owners of lie, concerning the Nuṣayriyya, who believe in the permissibility of wine, in the transmigration of the souls, in the antiquity of the world and the denial of the resurrection

[47] This chapter is partly based, with some additions and added translations, on Y. Friedman, "Ibn Taymiyya's *fatāwa* against the Nụsayrī-ʿAlawī sect" *Der Islam*, 82/2 (2005), pp. 349–363.

[48] M. St. Guyard, "Le fatwa d'Ibn Taymiyya sur les Nossairis, publié pour la première fois avec une traduction nouvelle", *Journal asiatique* (6ème série) 18 (1871), pp. 158–198.

[49] This hint, although not emphasized or detailed, was given by Dussaud in his *Histoire et religion des Nosairis*, pp. XXV–XXVI, 29–30.

> of the dead and [the existence of] heaven and hell out of our world. [They believe] that the five prayers represent five names which are ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, Muḥsin and Fāṭima, that the mentioning of these five releases them from the cleaning from impurity and from the rest of the obligations of the prayer. [See the rest in Appendix 8.].
>
> *fatwā*
>
> These people called Nuṣayriyya, they and the other kinds of Qarmaṭians, the Bāṭinīs, are more heretical than the Jews and the Christians and even more than several heterodox groups. Their damage to the [Muslim] community of [the Prophet] Muḥammad, may God pray for him and bless him, is greater than the damage of the infidels who fight [against the Muslims] such as the heretic Mongols, the Crusaders and others, since they [Nuṣayrīs and other Bāṭinīs] are pretending before the uneducated Muslims that they are Shīʿīs and loyal to the People of the House [*ahl al-bayt*] but in reality they do not believe in God, in his messenger, in his holy book, in obligation or prohibition, [they do not believe] in reward and punishment, in paradise and hell, or in any of the messengers prior to Muḥammad, may God pray for him and bless him, nor in one of the previous religions [prior to Islam]. They rather use the words of God and his messenger that are known to the Muslim scholars and would give them allegoric interpretation based on matters they invent and call them the esoterical sciences. [See the rest of the answer in Appendix 8.]

While the question focuses on the Nuṣayrīs, the first line of the response shows clearly that Ibn Taymiyya considered them to be part of the Ismāʿīlī branch of Shīʿism. Moreover, as will be demonstrated, it becomes clear in the following part of the *fatwā* that he is mainly addressing the Ismāʿīlīs. The name Nuṣayriyya is mentioned only once in the entire *fatwā*, in the opening phrase cited above. In another part, Ibn Taymiyya mentions the various names of the sect under discussion: Mulāḥida, Ismāʿīliyya, Qarāmiṭa, Bāṭiniyya, Khurramiyya and Muḥammara, but the name Nuṣayriyya is missing. All these names, excluding the pejorative name Mulāḥida (apostates) are included in the list of names given by al-Ghazālī's *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭiniyya* (twelfth century), which deals exclusively with the Ismāʿīlīs: Bāṭiniyya, Qarāmiṭa, Qarmaṭiyya, Khurramiyya, Khurramdīniyya, Ismāʿīliyya, Sabʿiyya, Bābakiyya, Muḥammara and Taʿlīmiyya.[50]

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[50] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭiniyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Qawmiyya li-ʾl-Ṭibāʿa wa-ʾl-Nashr, 1964), p. 11. He explains these names in ibid., pp. 11–17. Ibn Taymiyya admits having used this book for his purpose. See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad

Nevertheless, other versions of the same *fatwā* differ from that of St. Guyard. There are serious discrepancies between the versions appearing in three collections of Ibn Taymiyya's *fatāwā*: *al-Fatāwā 'l-kubrā*,[51] *Mukhtaṣar al-fatāwā 'l-Miṣriyya*[52] and another *Majmūʿ fatāwā*.[53] In these three versions, the same paragraph occurs with the list of the names of the sect, but in a different order and with the addition of the Nuṣayrīs: Mulāḥida, Qarāmiṭa, Bāṭiniyya, Ismāʿīliyya, Nuṣayriyya, Khurramiyya and Muḥammara. It seems reasonable that St. Guyard's version is Ibn Taymiyya's original text, while the other three versions, printed a century later, have been altered.

It appears that these versions were altered from their original form to agree with the version of a disciple of Ibn Taymiyya, the author of the *Mukhtaṣar*, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Baʿlī (d. 778/1376).[54] Al-Baʿlī even permitted himself to add one line to his master's *fatwā*. On the assumption that the original list of names of the discussed sects is the version of St. Guyard, then the Nuṣayrīs are mentioned only once in the opening of the *fatwā*. The hypothesis that the *fatwā* is focused on the Ismāʿīlīs, not the Nuṣayrīs, is also based on semantic arguments.

The theological accusations against the sect are all directed against Ismāʿīlī doctrines. It is true that some could also be relevant to the Nuṣayriyya, such as the allegorical interpretation of Islamic law and the influence of Greek philosophy. Nevertheless, the other accusations, such as the inspiration of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ,[55] do not seem to be related to the Nuṣayrīs. Even if we doubt that Ibn Taymiyya is focusing on Ismāʿīlī theological issues, it is clear that he points to specific historical accusations which most likely do not refer to the Nuṣayrīs,

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al-Najdī al-Ḥanbalī, *Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Raḥma, 1990), vol. 28, p. 635.

[51] Taqī 'l-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā 'l-kubrā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1987), vol. 3, p. 507.

[52] Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Baʿlī, *Mukhtaṣar al-fatāwā 'l-Miṣriyya li-Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm ibn ʿAbd al-Salām Ibn Taymiyya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Madanī, 1980), p. 461.

[53] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Najdī al-Ḥanbalī, *Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Raḥma, 1990), vol. 35, p. 152.

[54] See a short biography of this shaykh in al-Baʿlī, *Mukhtaṣar al-fatāwā 'l-Miṣriyya*, p. 15.

[55] About these 52 anonymous Ismāʿīlī epistles, see I. R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity, Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* (London/Boston: G. Allen and Unwin, 1982); P. Marquet, "*Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*", *EI*[2] III (1975), pp. 1098–1103.

but are directed at the activities of the Ismāʿīlī sect and *daʿwa* (propaganda) in the course of the preceding centuries. These accusations mainly consist of the killing of pilgrims in Mecca (294/906), stealing of the Black Stone of the Kaʿba (318/930–341/952), collaborating with enemies of Islam (mainly the Crusaders and the Mongols), taking over Egypt for two centuries (the Fāṭimids 359/969–567/1171) and helping the Mongols to murder the Caliph of Baghdad (656/1258).[56]

In conclusion, Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā* demonstrates his confusion between Nuṣayrīs and Ismāʿīlīs that probably originated from his incorrect assumption that the Nuṣayrīs are a splinter group of the Ismāʿīlī sect. this could be explained by the fact that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Nizārī branch of Ismāʿīlīsm took possession of numerous fortresses in the Nuṣayrī mountains, what is now called Jabal Anṣayriyya in Syria. As a result, the Ismāʿīlīs and the Nuṣayrīs shared the same geographical territory for the two centuries previous to the time of Ibn Taymiyya.[57] In addition, there are several similarities between the two groups concerning certain theological issues, such as cyclical history and emanative creation, since the Ghulāt influenced both Nuṣayrism and early Ismāʿīlism. Al-Ṭawīl, the modern ʿAlawī historian, in his history *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn*, describes peaceful meetings between the two sects at ʿĀna, and then in Ṣāfītā in 690/1291, in an attempt to unify the two groups.[58] Whether those meeting took place or not, the similarity between the two sects, who were under the influence of Neoplatonic thought and developed from the same Shīʿī source, cannot be doubted.

Ibn Taymiyya's text not only reflects confusion between Nuṣayriyya and Ismāʿīliyya, but also demonstrates the gap between the vast knowledge available about the Ismāʿīlīs, and the poor information about the Nuṣayrīs. This difference in the information available to Sunnīs about the two groups can be explained by the fact that the Ismāʿīlī doctrine had been disseminated throughout Egypt and Syria by the Fātimid Empire's *daʿwa* (propaganda) during the tenth century and by its Nizārī branch in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Unlike them, the Nuṣayrīs, who were weak and oppressed herdsmen, developed a

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[56] Guyard, "Le fatwa d'Ibn Taymiyya", pp. 169–170. About Ismāʿīlī history and theology mentioned here, see W. Madelung, "Ismāʿīliyya", *EI*², IV (1978), pp. 198–207.

[57] See Chapter 1. See also B. Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 97–124.

[58] *TA*, p. 365. There is no trace of these meetings in other sources.

strong tradition of *taqiyya*. A phrase in the main *istiftāʾ* (a) provides another explanation:

> Their ways were concealed from many people during the period of the Crusader occupation, [as they were] isolated in the coastal lands; when Islam came, their manners and wrong beliefs were veiled.[59]

Ibn Taymiyya's lack of knowledge concerning the Nuṣayrīs can also be demonstrated in the other *fatwā*s he issued against the sect in Syria.

2.2 *Other* fatwās*: against Nuṣayrīs and Druzes and the Nuṣayrī* mahdī *case*

Two other *fatwā*s of Ibn Taymiyya, (b) and (c), dealing with the Nuṣayrīs, are preserved in *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā*. Since these two are shorter than the main *fatwā* studied above (a), their translation is presented here, not in the Appendix.

The following short *fatwā* (b) is a general legal decision about how the Nuṣayrīs and Druze sects should be treated by Muslims:

(b)
istiftāʾ

> A question has been raised: what is [Islam's] judgment for the Durziyya and the Nuṣayriyya?"

fatwā

> These Durziyya and Nuṣayriyya are heretics according to [the judgment of] all Muslims; their [methods of] slaughter is not permitted for eating nor [can a Muslim] marry their women. They refuse to pay the *jizya* [poll tax] and are considered *murtaddūn* [sing. *murtadd*, apostate]. They are neither Muslims, nor Jews, nor Christians. They do not accept the obligations of the five prayers, the fast of Ramaḍān or the pilgrimage. They do not forbid what Allāh has forbidden [such] as [eating] carrion and [drinking] wine. Even if they apparently declare their belief [in Islam] and accept its doctrines, they should still be considered heretics by all Muslims. Regarding the Nuṣayriyya, they are a sect of Abū Shuʿayb Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr, who was one of the extremist Shīʿīs who believed that ʿAlī is God. They [the Nuṣayrīs] recite the [confessional] phrases: I testify that there is no other God but Ḥaydara [lion,

[59] St. Guyard, "Le fatwa d'Ibn Taymiyya", p. 165.

> one of ʿAlī's nicknames] the transcendent the esoteric/ and that there is no Veil but Muḥammad the righteous the faithful / and that there is no path to him but Salmān the powerful.[60]

This *fatwā* could be, among others, a later addition of Ibn Taymiyya's disciple Badr al-Dīn al-Baʿlī, since in some versions of the *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā* this specific *fatwā* does not appear at all.[61] Texts by al-Baʿlī, the Ḥanbalī shaykh of Baʿalbak, reflect an effort to include the Druzes in the attack against the Nuṣayrīs. The same effort is revealed in his *Mukhtaṣar* version of the principal *fatwā* (a), in which the opening phrase of Ibn Taymiyya is as follows: "This people called the Nuṣayrīs"; al-Ba'lī adds a comment "settled in the Druze mountains of Syria".[62] This geographical detail does not exist in any other version of the main *fatwā* (a) of Ibn Taymiyya against the Nuṣayrīs. We should understand this inclusion of the Druzes as the need of al-Baʿlī to attack this sect, which was widespread in his own region.

The second short *fatwā* (c) deals with the case of the Nuṣayrī *mahdī*, the revolt in Jabala that took place in 717/1317.

(c)
istiftāʾ

> A question: about a group of herdsmen who believed in the Nuṣayrī doctrine; all believed in a man about whom they had variety of opinions. Some claimed he was God, some said he was a prophet sent [by God], others said he was Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, meaning the *mahdī*. They ordered that anyone who should meet him [the *mahdī*] should prostrate themselves before him. In doing so they revealed their heresy [as they did in] cursing the Prophet Muḥammad's Companions. They revealed their refusal to obey and their determination to fight. Are we obliged to fight them and kill their warriors? Are we permitted [to hold as captives] their children and [to confiscate] their property?

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[60] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā*, ch. 3, p. 513; al-Ḥanbalī, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, vol. 35, p. 161.

[61] In the version used here (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), the *fatwā* against the Nuṣayrīs and the Druzes is the one preceding the *fatwā* against the Nuṣayrī *mahdī*. In another Egyptian version, this *fatwā* does not appear at all; see *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 357–359.

[62] al-Baʿlī, *Mukhtaṣar al-fatāwā 'l-Miṣriyya*, p. 460.

fatwā

> Praise be to God. These [Nuṣayrīs] should be fought as long as they resist, until they accept the law of Islam. The Nuṣayriyya [springs] from the worst heretical people guided by the devil, they are from the worst *murtaddūn* [apostates]; their fighters should be killed and their property should be confiscated. [The next part is a discussion about the question of how their children should be treated and whether they should be taken as slaves]...The Nuṣayriyya do not conceal their matter [i.e. their religion]; moreover, all Muslims know them well. They do not pray the five prayers, they do not fast during Ramaḍān, nor do they carry out the pilgrimage. They do not pay *zakāt* (alms), and they do not admit that it [paying *zakāt*] is an obligation. They permit [drinking] wine and other prohibited things. They believe that ʿAlī is God; they recite: "I testify that there is no other God but Ḥaydara the transcendent the esoteric/ and that there is no veil but Muḥammad the righteous the faithful/ and that there is no path to him but Salmān the powerful". Even if they do not reveal their extremism, and do not declare that this liar is the expected *mahdī*, they should be fought. This was ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib's case [when he was] ordered by the Prophet to deal with the *khawārij*[63]...[the following part is a discussion about their spoils and how they should be treated if they surrender or show regret]...they should be compelled to obey Islamic law; if they refuse they must be killed...Those who lead them astray should be put to death even if they show regret...so, without any doubt, this devil [the Nuṣayrī *mahdī*] must be killed. God knows better.[64]

The two short *fatwā*s (b, c), show clearly that Ibn Taymiyya's knowledge of the Nuṣayrī doctrines is not based on the sect's own sources, but on the information he had received from local Syrians that is included in the main *istiftāʾ* (a). This assumption is based on the fact that, in his accusations in the two short *fatwā*s, Ibn Taymiyya repeats the information mentioned in the anonymous question. This is evident when he cites from the main *istiftāʾ* (a), almost word for word, the Nuṣayrī *shahāda* (declaration of belief) about the Nuṣayrī triad of ʿAlī-Muḥammad-Salmān.

The two short *fatwā*s (b, c) mention other elements from the main *istiftāʾ* (a): the belief in ʿAlī's divinity and the rejection of the pillars of Islam.[65] Ibn Taymiyya's only addition to the information in the

[63] The Khawārij were the deserters of the camp of ʿAlī and later a Muslim sect. See G. Levi Della Vida, "Khawārij", *EI²*, V (1985), pp. 1106–1109.

[64] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā*, vol. 3, pp. 513–514.

[65] Ibid., pp. 513–515. Compare with St. Guyard, "Le fatwa d'Ibn Taymiyya", pp. 162–165.

istiftāʾ (a) is the fact that the Nuṣayrīs are followers of Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr,[66] a fact known to Muslim heresiographers since the twelfth century.[67] Ibn Taymiyya appears to have used the information concerning the Nuṣayrī sect included in the question he received from local Syrians, who were probably better informed about the sect's faith. But even that knowledge detailed in the first *istiftāʾ* (a) could have been based only on oral information and rumors, because the *istiftāʾ* (a) does not refer to any specific book, and explains that the Nuṣayrīs conceal their religion from the Muslims.[68] Even the two short *istiftāʾ*s (b, c) do not reveal more information concerning the Nuṣayrīs than the main *istiftāʾ* (a). Although the two short *fatwā*s (b, c) focus on the Nuṣayrīs without confusing them with other sects, they give a very limited, superficial and sometimes even wrong description of their religion.

Ibn Taymiyya was wrongly informed about the Nuṣayrīs, to the extent of confusing them with the Ismāʿīlīs. When he needed to describe their doctrines, he cited from the anonymous *istiftāʾ*s concerning the Nuṣayrīs, since he did not have any other source of information.

2.3 *Context and significance of the* fatwās

The study of Ibn Taymiyya's three *fatwā*s against the Nuṣayrīs offers some conclusions concerning the order in which they were written. While the third *fatwā* (c) clearly refers to the Nuṣayrīs' messianic uprising (717/1317), the second (b), dealing with the Druze and Nuṣayrī sects, cannot be associated with any precise period. Nevertheless, the first and main *fatwā* (a) studied by St. Guyard should be placed first historically, since elements from its *istiftāʾ* are repeated in the two later *fatwā*s. It could have been written in 705/1305 when, according to the historian Ibn al-Wardī (d. 748/1348), Ibn Taymiyya issued a *fatwā* against the Nuṣayrīs, and participated in a raid against them to secure the roads of al-Ẓanīnayn as a part of the Mamlūk raid against the Shīʾīs of Qisrawān.[69] But it seems more likely that it was written in

[66] Ibn Taymiyya, ibid., p. 513.

[67] See, for example, al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), *Al-milal wa-'l-niḥal*, pp. 192–193.

[68] St. Guyard, "Le fatwa d'Ibn Taymiyya", p. 163.

[69] ʿUmar ibn al-Wardī, *Taʾrīkh Bayrūt* (Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa al -Khaydariyya, 1969), vol. 2, p. 363; H. Lammens, "Les Noṣairīs furent-ils chrétiens? A propos d'un livre récent", *Revue de L'orient chrétien* (August 1899), p. 35. Al-Ẓanīnayn or al-Ḍanīnayn,

the same period as the second short *fatwā* (c), that is, at the time of the *mahdī*'s revolt. This seems to have been the view of the historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 1364/1441) who cited a portion of the main *istiftā*ʾ (a) almost verbatim, when describing the uprising. Al-Maqrīzī notes that the Nuṣayrīs believe in "permitting [the drinking] of wine, [believe in] transmigration, the antiquity of the world, deny the resurrection, deny paradise and hell, and that the five prayers are manifested by Ismāʿīl [in the *istiftā*ʾ by ʿAlī, a difference that should again raise the question concerning Sunnī acquaintance with the Nuṣayrīs], Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Muḥsin and Fāṭima…and that God is ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib".[70] The *fatwā* of Ibn Taymiyya was issued because of the need of the Mamlūks for the religious legitimacy to exterminate the sect. This explains why Ibn Taymiyya, in his main *fatwā* (a), shows much fear in accepting their assistance, which might lead to the opposite result—their acceptance as part of the Muslim community. In order to express his fear, Ibn Taymiyya compares them with the *munāfiqūn* (hypocrites), who are Muslims from the period of the Prophet Muḥammad who had not truly converted and only harmed Islam from within.[71] He adds: "using these hypocrite infidels…in Muslim battle camps, castles or corps is like using wolves to pasture sheep".[72] Ibn Taymiyya's fear seems also to be due to the lack of motivation to liquidate the Nuṣayrīs, who cultivated Muslim lands and even contributed to the struggle against foreign invaders. In the main *istiftā*ʾ (a) there is a question that demonstrates how marginal a subject the Nuṣayrīs were in the Muslim political agenda of the time, and how low the motivation to exterminate them:

> Is it permitted to kill the above-mentioned Nuṣayrīs and to confiscate their property, or not?…Is this better and more rewarding than preparing the war against the armies of the Mongols in their territory [that of the Nuṣayrīs] and the attack of the Chinese territory, and that of the Zanj [Africa], or is this [oppressing the Nuṣayrīs] better? Can a Nuṣayrī

today called al-Ḍaniyya, is a mountainous area between Beirut and Tripoli; see ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām al-Tadmurī, *Taʾrīkh Ṭarāblus* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li'l-Dirasāt wa-'l-Nashr, 1981), p. 97.

[70] Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa-'l-Nashr, 1971), vol. 2/1, p. 178. Compare with Guyard, «Le fatwa d'Ibn Taymiyya», pp. 162–164 and the translation of the main *fatwā* (a) in Appendix 8.

[71] See A. Brockett, "al-Munāfiqūn", *EI*², VII (1993), pp. 561–562.

[72] St. Guyard, "Le fatwa d'Ibn Taymiyya", p. 174.

> holy fighter be considered a *murābiṭ* [pl. *murābiṭūn*, frontier defender] and should he be rewarded as a *murābiṭ* in the border towns by the sea preventing the invasion of the Franks [Crusaders], or is this [oppressing them] more rewarding? Is it obligatory for someone who knows the doctrine of the mentioned [Nuṣayrīs] to publish their matter and to help eliminate their heresy and spread Islam among them? Then maybe God may turn their descendants and their into sons Muslims, or is it permitted to him to overlook and ignore [their heretical doctrine]?[73]

Ibn Taymiyya's judgment, that the Nuṣayrīs had sinned with *ridda* (apostasy) and deserved death, had no influence in the long term. Even the motivation to convert them by force did not last long, and mosques built in their villages by the Mamlūks were never used for prayers. The sect has survived to this day in the same territory while preserving its original religious beliefs.

However, the main interest concerns the question of the influence of the *fatwā*s of Ibn Taymiyya, or how they shaped the general view of Sunnī scholars towards the Nuṣayrī sect. Although they did not succeed in achieving their immediate goal to exterminate the sect, they certainly had a great influence on Sunnī thought in the short and long terms. The main *fatwā* (a) of Ibn Taymiyya is cited by almost every Sunnī who wishes to attack the Nuṣayrīs as heretics, from his time to the present. The question as to whether his *fatwā* applies to only the members of the Ḥanbalī school of law or to all Muslims demands a separate study. Although Ḥanbalism was limited to the Arabian Peninsula following the influence of Ḥanafism in Syria under the Ottoman Empire, Ibn Taymiyya was viewed as Shaykh al-Islam by many admirers from all four schools of Sunnī Islam. Ibn Taymiyya himself tried to present his view as that of the Ḥanbalīs, the Ḥanafīs, the Shāfiʿīs and the Mālikīs.[74] There is no doubt that his view was adopted by some of the most important Sunnī scholars of the Mamlūk period: the Syrian Ibn Kathīr (d. 632/1234) and the Egyptians al-Maqrīzī (d. 774/1372) and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. Nevertheless, the fact that no other *fatwā* against the Nuṣayrīs can be found in any Muslim source indicates that Ibn Taymiyya is the only eminent scholar to have explicitly declared their heresy and that his *takfīr* was not echoed by other important scholars.

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[73] Ibid., p. 166.

[74] Al-Ḥanbalī, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, vol. 28, p. 636.

2.4 *Refutation of Nuṣayrism together with Shīʿism*

There is a fundamental difference between the Shīʿī attack against the Nuṣayrīs and the attack of Ibn Taymiyya. The Imāmī critics reflect a theological controversy inside the Shīʿa concerning the limits of mystical interpretation. Ibn Taymiyya's attack is part of his general refutation of Shīʿism. In his *Minhāj al-Sunna*, Ibn Taymiyya explains that the goal of Shīʿism, called *rāfiḍa* (opposition), is to destroy Islam (*hadm al-Islām*).[75] The Shīʿīs are to blame because of their invention of the *taʾwīl*, the allegorical interpretation of the Qurʾān, which is for Ibn Taymiyya a *taḥrīf*, a falsification of the original meanings.[76] For him, Shīʿism is an invention of the convert Jew ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ, a mixture of Judaism, Christianity and *ghulūw*.[77] *Taqiyya* is viewed as doctrine of lies and hypocrisy in order to conceal heresy and *bidʿa* (innovation, a doctrine added after the time of the Prophet Muḥammad).[78] However, a worse accusation is that the Shīʿīs legitimize the most extreme heretical groups—mainly the Nuṣayrīs and the Ismaʿīlīs. For Ibn Taymiyya, these two sects are infidels who attribute divinity to human beings, such as their shaykhs and their admired saints, who believe in Zoroastrian and Sabean heretical doctrines under cover of Shīʿī identity.[79] In the *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā*, Ibn Taymiyya explains that "their religion [that of the Shīʿīs] admits into the Muslim community every heretic and apostate, as they did when they admitted the Nuṣayrīs".[80] In a picturesque description, he explains that: "Heresy enters [Islam] through the door of Shīʿism".[81] As proof for the rightfulness of his views, he claims that ʿAlī himself ordered the burning of Ibn Sabaʾ for his *ghulūw* and his demand that the first three caliphs be cursed,[82] and that the Nuṣayrīs attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq words he had never said.[83] He adds that their isolation in mountainous territories contributed to their igno-

[75] Taqī ʾl-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya* (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1989), vol. 7, p. 415.
[76] Ibid., vol. 3, p. 404.
[77] Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 21–23.
[78] Ibid., pp. 68–69.
[79] Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 476–477, 513–514; vol. 3, pp. 452–453; vol. 8, p. 259.
[80] Al-Ḥanbalī, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, vol. 4, p. 471. See the same accusation in ibid., vol. 28, p. 528; vol. 35, p. 415.
[81] Ibid., vol. 22, p. 367.
[82] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna*, vol. 3, p. 45.
[83] Al-Ḥanbalī, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, vol. 13, p. 244.

rance of Islam,[84] that the Nuṣayrīs flourished only under foreign rule[85] and that they collaborated, as he claims, with all the enemies of Islam.[86] In an exceptional accusation against the Nuṣayrīs, Ibn Taymiyya links them with Ṣūfism, more particularly with the Ṣūfī Shaykh ʿAfīf al-Dīn Sulaymān al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291). This is an interesting detail that is not confirmed elsewhere.[87]

Despite the marginalization of Ḥanbalism in the centuries that followed, it seems that the *fatwā* of Ibn Taymiyya gave legal confirmation for the views of Sunnī authorities concerning what they called the "Nuṣayrī heresy". As a result, the Ottomans, who were to succeed the Mamlūk dynasty in the sixteenth century, would leave the Nuṣayrīs (concentrated in present-day Syria and north Turkey) without any legal status, as opposed to monotheistic groups, until the nineteenth century.[88] Unfortunately, since there are no reliable sources concerning the situation of the Nuṣayrīs between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, we cannot estimate the influence of the Sunnī *takfīr* on the sect's situation during this long period.

3. *The Nuṣayrī identity through the* Dīwān *of al-Khaṣībī*

As to the question of the image of the members of the sect concerning their own identity, determining the self-image of a sect is a difficult task. A religious identity may change through centuries of historical turbulence, immigration, and different external influences. Although the *Silsilat al-turāth* sheds new light on the Nuṣayrī religion, it contains

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84 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna*, vol. 2, pp. 80–81.

85 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 418.

86 Ibid., vol. 7, pp. 211, 414. See the same accusation in the main *fatwā* (a) in Appendix 8.

87 According to Ibn Taymiyya, the Nuṣayrīs admired al-Tilimsānī who advanced the Sūfī doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being). He wrote a book for them and said when asked about his relations with them: "A part of me is Nuṣayrī [and the other is Sūfī]"; see ibid., vol. 2, pp. 626–627.

88 D. Dowes, "Knowledge and opression: The Nuṣayriyya in the late Ottoman period", in *Convegno sul Tema La Shīʿa nell'Impero Ottomano* (Rome, 15 April, 1991), pp. 163–164. As to the change of their status under the *tanẓīmāt* in the nineteenth century, see I. Ortayli, "Les groupes heterodoxes et l'administration Ottomane", *Studies in the History of Religions*, 76 (1995), pp. 209–210.

sources mainly from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. In order to answer a general question as to the Nuṣayrī identity, a source is needed that represents a wider historical period, the *Dīwān* of al-Khaṣībī, the best and only example of a pseudo-epigraphic composition. The *Dīwān* (see Appendix 1) was written by several shaykhs throughout the history of the sect, and as a result, it contains several levels of Arabic, a variety of styles, and even internal doctrinal evolution. Every Nuṣayrī poet added his poem in the name of al-Khaṣībī, in order to explain doctrines, to memorize his biography, and to canonize his doctrines.[89] The *Dīwān* of al-Khaṣībī has not been studied before, although it is a crucial document for the understanding of the Nuṣayrī religion. Here for the first time an English summary of the part of the *Dīwān* which can be proved to have been originally written by al-Khaṣībī (see Appendix 6) is offered. In Chapter 2 the *Dīwān* was used extensively as a reference for the sect's theology. In this chapter, Nuṣayrī identity is presented as it is reflected through the document.

In the original parts of the *Dīwān*, al-Khaṣībī attacks the Imāmī Shīʿīs whom he calls *muqaṣṣira*. In the later additions, the attacks concentrate mainly on sects that are found in Iraq and Syria. These attacks were important for the creation of the sect's identity: the split from the Imāmīs and the definition of what are considered by the Nuṣayrīs as heretical doctrines. Some of the groups are known by their names, but there appear to be other groups, while some sects cannot be identified at all since they no longer exist and do not appear in other sources. The cursed groups have nicknames, which are repeated in the *Dīwān*,[90] and are used to dishonor them.

i. Main groups and streams
   - *muqaṣṣir/muqaṣṣirānī/man qaṣṣara fī ʿilm/sāqiṭ* (deficient Shīʿīs/Imāmīs).

[89] Since the Damascus version of this *Dīwān* is later than that of Manchester (see Appendix 1), it probably contains some new poems, written after the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This may explain why Habīb thought that the Manchester version is incomplete; see S. Ḥabīb, *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī maʿa sharḥ li-ʾl-rumūz al-bāṭiniyya al-wārida fīhi: dirāsa wa-taḥqīq wa-sharḥ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-ʾl-Maṭbūʿāt, 2001), p. 21.

[90] For the nicknames of the rival sects in the *Dīwān*, see *DKH*, fol. 19a, 27b–28a, 44b–45a, 53b, 62b–63a, 71b, 89a, 98a, 99a.

- *nāṣib/murjī/marjū* (*nāṣibī*s, who are hostile to the Imāms, *murjiʾī*s, who accept authority,[91] i.e. Sunnīs).
- *Ḥashwī* (Ḥashwīs, "populists"—literalists, who base theology only on tradition, maybe referring to the Ḥanbalī Sunnīs).
- *Ḥanafiyya* (Ḥanafī Sunnīs).
- *Muʿtazil/Jahmī* (Muʿtazila,[92] rationalist theologian/Jahmīs, a Muʿtazilī group).[93]
- *Ḥallāja/Hālijīn/haljawī* /[followers of] Ḥallāj[94] (Sufis).

ii. Rival sects
- *aḥmarī/aḥmarānī/aḥmariyyīna/*[whose followers are] *ghāliyyūna* (Isḥāqīs followed by Ghulāt).
- *Shārī/Shārīʿī* (Shārīʿīs, Shīʿī followers of Shārīʿī,[95] a rival of Ibn Nuṣayr).
- *Zaydī/Zaydiyya/Kaysī/*[followers of] Kaysān (a successor of Mukhtār, leader of the seventh-century rebellion in Kufa.[96] The Kaysīs and Zaydīs[97] always appear together).
- *Batrī* (Batriyya, a Zaydī sub-sect).[98]
- *samʿal/samʿalī/samʿaliyyūna/*[followers of the] *Qarmaṭī* (Ismāʿīlīs/Qarmaṭians).
- *Faḍaḥ/Faḍaḥī/Faḍaḥiyyat hāmān*, *wāqif/wāqifīn/ahl al-waqf wa-l-ḥīra* (the Faḍaḥīs appear as part of the Wāqifīs/Sevener Shīʿīs).
- *ʿAzqara/ʿAzqariyyāt* (Azāriqa, a group of the Khawārij).[99]

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[91] *Murjiʾī* refers to those who "suspend the judgment of God [as to the authority's justice] to the end of time". This conservative view was mostly maintained by Sunnīs; see al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-ʾl-niḥal*, pp. 137–138; M. A. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A source-Critical Study* (Cambridge/London/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 23–50.

[92] The Muʿtazilīs mentioned here may not be the well-known group, but rather another sub-sect of the Nuṣayrīs; see *MN*, fol. 137b; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 19.

[93] See al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-ʾl-niḥal*, pp. 73–74.

[94] The mystic al-Ḥallāj is also cursed by al-Ṭabarānī; see *MA*, p. 72.

[95] Concerning al-Shārīʿī, see al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna ʾl-firaq*, pp. 239–240; also cursed by al-Ṭabarānī; see *MA*, p. 72.

[96] Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-ʾl-niḥal*, pp. 145–149.

[97] The Zaydīs, as in the case of the Muʿtazilīs, may not be the followers of Zayd ibn ʿAlī, but the followers of the heretic Nuṣayrī Zayd al-Ḥāsib; see *MN*, fol. 138a; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 19–20.

[98] Concerning the Zaydīs and the Batrīs, see al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-ʾl-niḥal*, pp. 153–156, 159–160.

[99] Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-ʾl-niḥal*, pp. 111–116.

iii. Unidentified groups
- *labadī, banjī/banjawī/banjiyya.*

This list reflects all the groups rejected by the Nuṣayrīs. Concerning their attitude to the Sunnīs, they follow the Shīʿī hard line of considering them as the *nāṣibī*s, i.e. enemies of the Imāms. This hostility to Sunnism is an echo of the accusations made against the Imāmīs. While the relations between Nuṣayrīs and Imāmīs are characterized by mutual criticism, those between Sunnīs and Nuṣayrīs are characterized by mutual hostility and unquestioned *takfīr*:

Imāmī Shīʿīs —— *Ghulāt* ————→ Nuṣayrīs ←———— *kufār* —— Sunnīs
Imāmī Shīʿīs ←———— *muqaṣṣira* ——Nuṣayrīs—— *nāṣiba* ————→ Sunnīs

3.1 *Muslims*

Having verified the negative means for Nuṣayrī self-identification, the positive definition as it appears in the *Dīwān* (backed by other sources of the sect) is now considered.

The Nuṣayrīs consider themselves complete Muslims, because they combine *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*.[100] The Qurʾān is the most cited book in their literature and it appears in the *Dīwān* as the holy book of the sect.[101] We may doubt the authenticity of al-Jannān's declaration in his *Īḍāḥ al-miṣbāḥ*: "The religion for God is Islam" (*inna ʾl-dīn ʿind Allāh al-Islām*; Qurʾān, Āl ʿImrān [3]:19),[102] a citation from the Qurʾān that also appears in al-Adhanī's *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* (chapter 16).[103] The problem of the *Īḍāḥ al-miṣbāḥ*'s reliability is dealt with in Appendix 1. But the terminology of the Nuṣayrī medieval leaders is typically Islamic: al-Jillī describes the duties of the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* as the *sharīʿa* (Islamic law) and cites another verse from the Qurʾān describing the religion as that of Islam: "Today I have concluded your religion for you and completed my blessing upon you and I have made Islam a religion for your satisfaction" (Qurʾān, al-Māʾida [5]:3).[104] Al-Ṭabarānī, in his

[100] *DKH*, fol. 22a, 122a.
[101] Ibid., fol. 30b.
[102] *IM*, p. 257.
[103] *BS*, p. 26.
[104] *KBS*, p. 270.

Ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā, explains that the message of Islam is universal, since it is the same as that of all the monotheistic religions, but Islam is the most exalted revelation:

> It is true that Islam is the conviction in God's appearance and belief [*īmān*] and faith in him is by the truth of the esoteric knowledge [*bi-ḥaqīqat al-maʿrifa*]. Even if the religious laws [*sharāʾiʿ*, pl. of *sharīʿa*] differ as to the prohibitions and permissions, in fact they do not differ because [all] the prophets and messengers referred to one God and there is no difference between them in the issue of the worship of God, except the fact that the Muḥammadī appearance is exalted and that of the others [the messengers of other monotheistic religions] is less respectable. This is based on the exalted [God's] words: "The might is to God, to his messenger and to his believers" [Qurʾān, al-Munāfiqūn (63): 8]. As to the other [monotheistic religions] he said: "Fight against those who do not believe in God, or in the last day [of judgment] and who do not prohibit what God and his messenger prohibited, who do not believe in the true religion, who have received the Holy Book [monotheistic religions], until they pay the *jizya* [poll tax] and are subordinated" [Qurʾān, al-Tawba (9): 29]. This description is not appropriate to someone who believes that he has a true heart and believes that the truth is in his heart and that Islam is not obligatory. How could such a person obtain the knowledge of the *tawḥīd* and the truth?…That is the reason why the master Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī, may God sanctify his soul, made his disciple know the Qurʾān by heart. But when we saw that it takes a long time and life is short so we abridged and permitted the study of only the short chapters [*al-juzʾ al-mufaṣṣal*,[105] i.e. chapters 49 to 114], because they contain all the principles of the Qurʾān.

Al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba also uses Islamic terminology when he cites in his *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn* the words of the Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā, that one who believes that God has a form, "deviates from the religion of Islam [*kharaja ʿan millat al-Islām*], because [knowing] God is only by extreme mystical monotheism [*al-tawḥīd al-khāliṣ*]".[106]

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[105] The chapters in the Qurʾān are divided into *ṭuwal* (very long chapters), *miʾun* (approximately a hundred verses), *mathānī* (under a hundred) and *mufaṣṣal* (divided [by the *basmala*]), which are the short verses. See, for example, A. al-Laithy, *What Everyone Should Know about the Qurʾan* (Antwerp: Garant, 2005), pp. 59–61.

[106] *HAD*, pp. 35–36.

3.2 *Jaʿfarī Shīʿīs*

It is reflected through all the *Dīwān*, as well as other writings of the sect, that the Nuṣayrīs consider themselves Twelver Shīʿīs[107] who believe that the Imāms are the sources of knowledge and expect the return of the last Imām, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan as the *mahdī*. In his *qaṣīda* called *Akālīl qudus* (crowns of sanctity), al-Khaṣībī says:

(Describing the Prophet Muḥammad)
How exalted is the pure father of Qāsim/ the endless light of eternity
And the messenger the seal (of prophecy)/ the observer the resurrector
The ruler, the wise/ who knows everything in detail
Details of good virtues
(1. ʿAlī—the first Imām)
As to the abstract [who is] your Lord/ it is ʿAlī which is as result
An Imām which gave you life/ who fed you with wisdom
Who guided you to success/ and you have seen with your own eyes
From the glorious divinity
(2. Ḥasan and 3. Ḥusayn)
As to the two grandsons, you would be saved/ in front of me as would be saved
By them those who to the heaven/ would exalt with no regret
Who would be unlimited in their/ exalting the best journey
In the sky of birds
(4. ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn:)
As the fourth [Imām] our lord/ ʿAlī is the most excellent rewarder
It is he who possesses the divine throne and/ who is the proof of God's religion
The scales and balance/ and of him who is called the master
Of the pure believers
(5. Muḥammad al-Bāqir)
As to the fifth of the veils/ he is the composer and provider of the holy books
Creator of the Lord's wisdom/ [saying:] from me it emanates from absence
From flowing abundant knowledge/ of he who opens knowledge (*yabquru ʾl-ʿilm*)
Of the vague secrets
(6. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq:)
As to the well-known Lord al-Ṣādiq/ he is [reflected] in the knowing speaker (*nāṭiq*)
The breaker the reconnecter [*al-fātiq al-rātiq*] the first and the pre-existent
The changer [of fate] maintaining of wealth/ [owner] of the sea of God's knowledge

[107] The term Shīʿa is repeated several times throughout the *Dīwān*; see, for example, *DKH*, fol. 8a, 23b, 42b, 45a, 49b, 55a, 60b. As to their identity as Twelvers, see ibid., 25a, 59a (includes the names of all the twelve Imāms), 85b, 118a.

Who prays in the mornings.
(7. Mūsā ʾl-Kāẓim)
As to the seventh, he is for defence/ my Imām my master Mūsā
Pillar of religion and of the world/ meaning [*maʿnā*] of heaven of the shelter
Flowing of good happiness/ from him would profit the Shīʿa
The best of the benefit is from him
(8. ʿAlī al-Riḍā)
As to the eighth you would scorn an Imām/ alas! if you only knew
How powerful and admirable/ and [his] enormous eternal light
Possessing knowledge he existed for eternity/ he who was the candle of God
In the darkness for the travelers
(9. Muḥammad al-Jawād)
As to the ninth you would turn/ to the Imām as a guided instructor
All the people are guided by him/ any one of his [believers] takes example from him
This one is the winner the luckiest/ he who prays for the ninth
This one declines losing
(10. ʿAlī al-Hādī)
As to the tenth, you would ignore/ [even] if you would try hard you could not grasp
A complete and perfect Imām/ first light of extreme love
The water's source of creatures and the fountain/ and the pillar of religion is my lord.
And the lord of all my observers
(11. Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī)
As the eleventh it is my Imām/ the owner of the emigration [*hijra*]
Who keep silent as to his [apparent] weakness/ and who restrains his power
Until the return [*rajʿa*] and the fight back / as to the *mahdī*, he is God's sword
Master of every patient
(12. Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan the *mahdī*)
As to the twefth/ the first and the last
The esoteric and the exoteric (*al-bāṭin wa-ʾl-ẓāhir*)/ the owner of might and rule
Who grants support and is the saver/ who maintains the vengeance
Who obtains the revenge
An Imām who would possess earth/ and maintain his obligated rule
Over the creatures as he would judge/ and all his judgment would be accepted
There will be no length or width/ but only Islam would be seen
A religion between the edges of earth[108]

It is clear from this poem that the Nuṣayrīs accept the principle of the twelve Imāms, adding their mystic interpretation as to their divine nature. Since they claim to understand the two aspects of Islam, the

[108] *DKH*, fol. 58a–61a.

esoteric and exoteric, the Nuṣayrīs consider only themselves as being the "true Shīʿa" (*Shīʿat al-ḥaqq*)[109] and the "Shīʿa of the pure believers" (*Shīʿat al-aṭhār*).[110] Since most of the sect's traditions are transmitted by the mystic disciples of the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (mostly Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar), the Nuṣayrīs also call themselves Jaʿfariyya (followers of Jaʿfar)[111] or *Shīʿat Jaʿfar*.[112] This identification as Jaʿfarīs enables the Nuṣayrīs to re-establish their connection with the Imāmī Shīʿīs when necessary. Indeed, in the twentieth century the Nuṣayrīs embraced Imāmī Jaʿfarī law, after a century of isolation, with the help and instruction of Shīʿī scholars in Lebanon, Iraq and Iran.[113]

3.3 *Ghulāt*

The Nuṣayrīs were always aware that they were accused of *ghulūw*.[114] However, they never associated themselves with the Ghulāt and even accused them of heresy, mainly for two reasons: the Ghulāt's consideration of ʿAlī as an incarnation (*ḥulūl*) of God, not an illusionary vision (docetism), and because of their separation of divinity between Muḥammad and ʿAlī who are a single entity.[115] For example, the followers of Isḥāq al-Aḥmar are called Ghulāt and are considered heretics. But al-Khasībī's *Dīwān* reveals an interesting method of confrontation with the accusation of *ghulūw*. Instead of rejecting it, al-Khaṣībī uses the term *ghulūw* as a positive term ("zeal" instead of "fanaticism") by attributing to the sect the *ghulūw ilā Allāh* (the zeal for God),[116] *ghulūw ilā 'l-mawlā* (zeal for the Lord)[117] or *ghulūw ilā 'l-tawḥīd* (extreme

[109] Ibid., fol. 8b, 62a, 99b. The expression *Shīʿat al-ḥaqq* also appears in the *Dīwān of Makzūn al-Sinjārī*; see, for example, *DMS*, p. 88.
[110] Ibid., pp. 23b, 39b.
[111] Ibid., fol. 60b.
[112] *HIF*, p. 80.
[113] Concerning the training of ʿAlawīs as Jaʿfarī *qāḍī*s (judges) and *muftī*s in the twentieth century and their own declaration concerning their Jaʿfarī identity in 1936 and 1973, see M. Kramer, "Syria's ʿAlawīs and Shīʿīsm", in M. Kramer (ed.), *Shīʿīsm, Resistance and Evolution* (London: Mansell, 1987), pp. 240–246; ʿAlī ʿAzīz Ibrāhīm, *al-ʿAlawiyyūn: fidāʾiyyū 'l-Shīʿa 'l-majhūlūna* (Najaf: Kulliyyat al-Fiqh, 1972), pp. 38–42 (deals with a delegation of ʿAlawīs from Tripoli, Ṭarṭuṣ, Lādhiqiyya and Jabala to Qumm and Najaf); *al-Nahār* (newspaper, Lebanon), 6 July 1973, p. 3 (inclusion of the ʿAlawīs in Lebanon under the authority of the Shīʿī Supreme Council).
[114] See, for example, *DKH*, fol. 18b.
[115] *HAD*, p. 142; *KBS*, p. 248.
[116] *DKH*, fol. 11a.
[117] Ibid., fol. 23b.

monotheism).[118] In one place in the *Dīwān* al-Khaṣībī even addresses his disciples, saying: *yā Ghulātī* (my Ghulāt! i.e. zealous believers).[119] In one of his *qaṣīda*s, he even replaces the term Ghulāt with the word *ghāliya* (pl. *ghawālin*),[120] a sort of perfume, to imbue it with an even more positive sense. In the *Dīwān*, the frequently repeated term *muqaṣṣira* is a negative nickname for deficient Shīʿī believers.[121] The main sins attributed to them are *taqṣīr* (limitation of the Imāms' powers) and the rejection of the *tafwīd* (delegation of divine powers to the Imāms), an important tenet in Nuṣayrī theology (though different from that of the Mufawwiḍa).[122]

An important element in the self-identification of the Nuṣayrīs as mystics (or Ghulāt) is the fact that they are a small group who want to be saved from the material world, as opposed to the "mass" of the Shīʿīs (*ʿāmmat al-Shīʿa*) and Sunnīs (simply *al-ʿāmma*). Both groups are in a state of *jāhiliyya* (ignorance as opposed to Islam), since they do not understand the true nature of the Imāms and the meaning of their message.[123] According to a tradition transmitted by Mufaḍḍal, the Imām Jaʿfar claimed that of the 20,000 (or 50,000 according to another version) Shīʿīs of Kufa, only 25 are monotheistic mystics (*muwaḥḥidūn*) who know the *bāṭin* and keep their knowledge secret; the rest know only the *ẓāhir*.[124] This conception of minority is part of the sect's identity. It is a mentality of *taqiyya*, that of an oppressed sect who should keep its principles secret.

The attitude towards the Sunnīs is more hostile than to the Imāmī Shīʿīs. For the Nuṣayrīs the *nāṣiba*[125] and the *murjiʾa* are the worst of God's creation, even "worse than the Jews and the Christians".[126] Al-Khaṣībī repeats in his *Dīwān* his plea to God to curse the *ahl al-Shām* (inhabitants of Syria), Sunnīs who are proud of their Umayyad history.[127] As opposed to this, he asks God to bless Kufa, which he calls "our Kufa" (*Kūfatunā*) which is the refuge of the Shīʿīs who seek shelter

118 Ibid., fol. 21b.
119 Ibid., 20b.
120 Ibid., fol. 8a, 49b.
121 See, for example, ibid., fol. 8b, 10b, 11b, 19a, 24a, 45a, 71b, 96b, 100b.
122 See in the *Dīwān* ibid., fol. 34a, 96a, b, 98a, 100b, 115b.
123 *HAD*, p. 133.
124 *MS*, pp. 221–222; *HAD*, pp. 106–107.
125 *HAD*, p. 163.
126 Ibid., p. 124.
127 *DKH*, fol. 46a, 47b–48a.

(*Shīʿat al-iʿtiṣām*).[128] Other sites that are inhabited or visited by the Shīʿīs are blessed in the *Dīwān*, such as Karbalāʾ (tomb of Ḥusayn, still destroyed in the time of al-Khaṣībī), Samarra (tombs of ʿAlī ʾl-Hādī and Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī), Najaf (tomb of ʿAlī) and Mecca.[129] The geographical aspect contributes to the creation of the Nuṣayrī identity and their mentality of *taqiyya*. They are aware of the fact that they are strangers, Shīʿīs who have migrated to the heart of the Sunnī world. This situation seems to deepen the concept of an exalted minority originating from light, which is surrounded or imprisoned in the material evil world. The longings of al-Khaṣībī for Iraq represent the yearnings of the Nuṣayrīs for their original state, which is the world of light.

A Nuṣayrī tradition demonstrates the position of the sect between the two main streams of Islam. According to this tradition, the Imām al-Bāqir said to one of his disciples who asked him whom he could trust in religious matters:

> Seek for a man who would be accused by the ʿ*āmma* (Sunnīs) of heresy and whom the *muqaṣṣira* (Imāmī Shīʿīs) would excommunicate and whom the *mufawwiḍa* would overlook—from such person you should learn your religion.[130]

3.4 *Nuṣayrīs*

The fundamental self-definition of the sect is that which is based on its eponyms and founders. The small mystical circle of Ibn Nuṣayr was called Namīriyya or Numayriyya until the ninth century, as is confirmed by Nawbakhtī's *Firaq al-Shīʿa*.[131] According to the reliable part of the *Dīwān* of al-Khaṣībī, the sect was already called Nuṣayriyya in his time.[132] The earliest mention of this name in external sources is in the eleventh-century Druze epistle written by Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī against what he called the "Nuṣayrī heretic".[133] But ʿAbd al-Qāhir

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[128] Ibid., fol. 49b.
[129] Ibid., fol. 24a, 33b, 49a, b, 76b, 93a.
[130] *HAD*, p. 164.
[131] Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, pp. 93–94.
[132] *DKH*, fol. 49b. According to this part of the *qaṣīda*, the Nuṣayriyya is defined as the sect following the doctrines of the Furātiyya (group of 'Umar Ibn al-Furāt), who in turn follow the Juʿfiyya (group of al-Mufaḍḍal ibn 'Umar al-Juʿfī).
[133] The name Nuṣayrī is repeated several times after the title of Ḥamza ibn ʿAlīʿs *al-Risāla al-dāmigha li-ʾl-fāsiq: al-radd ʿalā ʾl-Nuṣayrī*. This source was discussed earlier in historical and theological contexts.

al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), the first Sunnī to mention the name of the sect, still used the name Namīriyya/Numayriyya in the same century.[134] Even if the Nuṣayrīs preferred to call themselves *muwaḥḥidūn* or *ahl al-tawḥīd* (monotheists), al-Ṭabarānī (eleventh century) also calls them Khaṣībiyya and Jilliyya, after their great leaders in the tenth century, al-Khaṣībī and al-Jillī. It is interesting to note the different definitions of the sect, which according to al-Ṭabarānī was the sect (*firqa*) of al-Khaṣībī and was followed by the order (*ṭarīqa*) or in another version the sect (*ṭāʾifa*) of al-Jillī.[135] Several explanations can be proposed for these terms. In the case of *firqa* and *ṭāʾifa* it seems that there is no difference between them. Both can be defined as the "saved sect": *al-firqa al-nājiya* or *al-ṭāʾifa al-manṣūra*. But the term *ṭarīqa*, if it was originally used by al-Ṭabarānī, is a typical Ṣūfī term. The *Bākūra al-Sulaymāniyya* gives an indication that the name Khaṣībiyya was still in use, alongside the name Nuṣayriyya, in the nineteenth century.[136] In al-Shahrastānī's *al-Milal wa-'l-niḥal* (twelfth century) only the name Nuṣayriyya is used.[137] In the twentieth century, the leaders of the sect changed the name from Nuṣayriyya, which symbolizes a thousand years of persecution and isolation, to ʿAlawiyya (partisans of ʿAlī, a synonym for the Shīʿa), a name that symbolizes their wish to re-establish their ties with the Shīʿī world.[138]

The first change of the sect's name, from Namīriyya/Numayriyya to Nuṣayriyya also demands an explanation. It seems to reflect the enlargement of the sect's community. While the name Namīriyya/Numayriyya, based on the *nisba* of the Namīr/Numayr clan, represents a narrow tribal affiliation, the name Nuṣayriyya reflects a larger and more diverse group of people who embrace Ibn Nuṣayr's doctrine. The name Khaṣībiyya, from the other eponym, also represents what maybe called the "orthodox Nuṣayrism".

The self-identification of the Nuṣayrīs has been clarified by analysing the definition of their sect in relation to other religious groups. This

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[134] Al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna 'l-firaq*, p. 239.
[135] *MA*, pp. 19, 69–70.
[136] *BS*, p. 53.
[137] al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-'l-niḥal*, pp. 192–193.
[138] This initiative of changing the name of the sect to ʿAlawiyya and its goals are demonstrated in al-Ṭawīl's book *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (see Appendix 1, item 60). As to the possible French involvement, see D. Pipes, "The Alawi capture of power in Syria", *MES* 25 (1989), pp. 429–450; see also *al-Nadhīr* (newspaper of the Muslim Brothers), 22 October 1980, p. 35.

identification is based on religious, geographic and historical aspects. The ethnic aspect is dealt with in Chapter 1. It has been assumed that their leaders were of Arab origin and that their community was a mixture of Arabs and Persians. It has also been assumed that several members of the sect were Christian Arabs who preferred to convert to Nuṣayrī Islam, which contained some terms and symbols that were familiar to them. However, the available sources cannot provide a clear picture of the ethnic structure of the sect in most of Nuṣayrī history. The next aspect of the sect's identity is their unique way of initiation into their secret religion.

4. *Initiation*

Initiation is a process involving great effort and trust from both the initiate and his master. Once a person passes all the stages of initiation, he is indentified as a Nuṣayrī and one of the *muwaḥḥidūn*. This is the beginning of the journey of the mystic back to the world of light. Only after proving his ability and loyalty will he be introduced to the mystical knowledge.

The issue of initiation into the Nuṣayrī religion and its cults were studied in Dussaud's monograph and more recently by Halm in his *Islamische Gnosis*. These two studies were based on the anonymous document entitled *Sharḥ al-Imām wa-mā yūjabu ʿalayhi wa-mā yulzimuhū* (an explanation of the duty of the Imām and his responsibility), in Ms. Paris 1540 (fol. 155a–167a) and the *Bākūra* of Sulaymān al-Adhanī. While the first document, copied in 1211/1796 by a certain Ḥasan Manṣūr Khalīl is impossible to date, the second, the *Bākūra*, reflects merely the process of initiation in one region in the nineteenth century of an initiate who is hostile to his Imām and his initiators. Another description of the initiation is available in the book of Lyde, based on the *Kitāb al-mashyakha*, also an apparently modern document, also concerning the duty of the Imām. However, the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* contains the only available original document concerning the process of initiation in the medieval period, an original collection of questions and answers, defined as *fatwā*s, compiled by al-Ṭabarānī. This book, called *Kitāb al-ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā* (book of collections concerning the science of *fatwā*s, see Appendix 1), sheds new light on the process of initiation, the sessions of the mystics and other related topics in the medieval period. In the following section,

this last document is analyzed and the information it provides is combined with the materials of Lyde, Dussaud and Halm.

Halm recent study of initiation in medieval Ismāʿīlism, based mainly on the *Kitāb al-ʿālim wa-ʾl-ghulām*, a book of the *dāʿī* (propagandist) Ibn Ḥawshab Manṣūr al-Yaman (d. 322/934), reveals a similarity between the Ismāʿīlī process of initiation and that of the Nuṣayrīs. This similarity could be explained by the geographical proximity of the two sects, the influences of each sect on the other, and the mutual sources of inspiration, which are medieval secret societies (such as the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ), mystical Ṣūfī orders and Persian and Neoplatonic groups within the world of Islam. Halm describes the Ismāʿīlī initiation as a personal process between a pupil, who is a young man (*ghulām*), called *mustajīb* (initiate) and a *dāʿī*, an instructor who is sent by his shaykh. After the young man is persuaded that he wants to be initiated, he takes an oath of secrecy (*ʿahd* or *mīthāq*). The *dāʿī* presents him with some subjects of study and leaves him to consider them for a while. Then the young man is called to meet the shaykh who explains to him that the esoteric knowledge will set him free and give him new life, and that he will be given a new name after seven days. At the following meetings he is entrusted with the *amāna* (deposit), which is the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin* concerning God, the Prophet, the Imām, the creation and other religious matters. At the end of the sessions (*majālis*, sing. *majlis*), which take place in the shaykh's house in the presence of the *dāʿī*, the new initiate returns to his village, turns into a *dāʿī* himself, and travels and tries to initiate other people. His initiation includes three stages. The first is compared with a suckling infant, the second with a growing child, and the third with developing maturity. The instructor is responsible for adjusting his teaching to the level and ability of the initiate. The sessions include several initiates if the *dāʿī* is a prominent shaykh. As opposed to the Nuṣayrī sessions, women are also included. The *bāṭin* never takes place in a mosque or other public place. Even in the Fāṭimid Empire, where the *majālis al-ḥikma* (sessions of wisdom) were legitimized, took place in closed rooms in the caliph's palace.[139]

[139] H. Halm, *The Fatimids and Their Traditions of Learning* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 17–27; "The Ismaʿili oath of allegiance (ʿahd) and the 'sessions of wisdom' (majālis al-ḥikma) in Fatimid times", in F. Daftary (ed.), *Medieval Ismaʾili History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 91–115.

4.1 *Initiation in medieval Nuṣayrīsm*

Al-Ṭabarānī's *Kitāb al-ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā* provides details of the process of initiation in the period of the founders of the Nuṣayrī sect. He collected 120 questions and answers and wrote a compilation to serve the *ʿāmmat ahl-al-tawḥīd*, a term which can be translated as the members of the sect who are still in the process of initiation (not yet *khāṣṣa*). His book is the sum of the decisions of the leaders of the sect from Ibn Nuṣayr to al-Jillī on the issue of initiation. As such, it reflects the development of the initiation in the Nuṣayrī sect between the ninth and the tenth centuries. The process of initiation is not only compared to life, from gestation to maturity. The meeting of instructor and the initiate is also compared to the soul entering a woman's womb. The Nuṣayrī instructor takes an oath (*ʿahd*) of secrecy from the initiate. The first stage is a meeting which includes the teaching of the *ẓāhir*, such as the love for ʿAlī's family and the *barāʾa* for their enemies, an introduction of a few secrets of the sect, and the *sharb al-saʾr* (drinking of what is left) a term altered in later sources to *sharb al-sirr* (drinking of the secret).[140] Al-Ṭabarānī, in his *Kitāb al-ḥāwī*, explains in an important paragraph that the term *saʾr* is a synonym for *suʾr* (literally, drinking what is left in the glass). He explains also that the *sharb al-saʾr* signifies *istiʿrāf wa-taʾnīs* (seeking knowledge and becoming a [new] educated man).[141] The drinking of the wine left in the master's glass is an important ceremony in the initiation. The custom in Islam not to drink all in the glass corresponds to the well-known Ḥadīth, "*idhā sharibtum fa-asʾirū*" (when you drink always leave a small portion). The Shīʿī tradition in particular recommends *suʾr al-muʾminīn* (drinking what is left from the believers) because it can transmit a

[140] See in *HIF*, pp. 49, 53, 55, 73, 75. The expression "drinking of the secret" is given in later sources, for example by Lyde; see *KMA*, pp. 253–255; al-Adhanī, *BS*, p. 49, gives "drinking of the secret of *ʿayn-mīm-sīn*". As to the translation of the words *saʾr* and *suʾr*, see Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-lugha* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2001), vol. 13, pp. 34–35; Muḥammad Murtaḍā 'l-Ḥusaynī 'l-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs fī jawharat al-qāmūs* (Kuwait: Maṭbaʿat Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, 1972), vol. 16, pp. 483–484. In the same book, al-Ṭabarānī gives an additional explanation for the term, which derives from the root s.r.r., as *sārr*, a synonym of *surriyya*, pl. *sarārī* (slave) since the initiate passes from slavery in the material world to freedom in the world of light; see *HIF*, p. 49.

Although it is assumed that the term *saʾr* derives from Arabic, there is a possibility that the variety of Nuṣayrī interpretations of it indicate that it does not. It could derive from the Persian *sār* (test), a synonym of *mihnet*.

[141] *HIF*, pp. 53, 75.

person's blessing to his Muslim brothers until the end of time and even cure a believer from seventy illnesses.[142] Indeed, al-Ṭabarānī says: "the *saʾr* is [synonym for] the *suʾr*, and the *suʾr* of the believers is [provides] good health".[143] In this light, we should understand the initiate's drinking of the *saʾr* of his master in Nuṣayrīsm as a transmission of knowledge, which gives him an eternal blessing and brings good health to his soul.

The second part of the first stage involves another ritual called *khuṭba* (engagement before marriage, also speech) conducted by the *naqīb* (instructor), in which the initiate is called, after being judged appropriate, to continue his initiation, and must prove his submission to his teacher by putting a shoe on his head. Then he drinks with the other participants the *ʿabd al-nūr*, a glass of wine that represents divine light and mystic knowledge and that is permitted only on this occasion.[144] Al-Ṭabarānī explains that if there is no wine, it is permitted to drink water with some raisins or dates.[145] Since the ritual of *khuṭba*, called by non-Nuṣayrīs *khiṭāb* (speech), involved the drinking of wine, which is severely prohibited in orthodox Islam, it was forbidden by Ibn Taymiyya and the Sunnī Mamlūk authorities, who were aware of its performance by the Nuṣayrīs.[146]

The second stage is compared with marriage (*nikāḥ*) and is called *taʿlīq* (attachment) in which the initiate receives the "deposit" (*wadīʿa* in Nuṣayrī terminology)[147] of the secret knowledge. As in marriage, it demands the presence of witnesses. A *taʿlīq* can take place in the daytime or during the night.[148] A *taʿlīq* without witnesses is permitted but not recommended, and is compared to *mutʿa* (marriage for a

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[142] Some Shīʿī scholars attribute this tradition to ʿAlī himself; see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 63, pp. 21–22; Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿa ilā taḥṣīl al-sharīʿa* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 1991), vol. 17, pp. 208–209.

[143] *HIF*, p. 75.

[144] Ibid., p. 54; compare with the similar description in *BS*, pp. 2–3. The ritual of putting the shoe on the head is rare in Islam. The Indian Sūfī poet Amīr Khusraw (d. 726/1325), is said to have had the shoes of his Sufi master on his head to show his devotion to him; see M. Hafiz Syed, "Hadrat Nizamuddin Aulia", in M. Taher (ed.), *Encyclopedic Survey of Islamic Culture* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2003), vol. 13, *Sufi Saints*, p. 185.

[145] Ibid., p. 74.

[146] Concerning the prohibition of the *khiṭāb* in order to stop initiation into Nuṣayrism, see the *fatwā* of Ibn Taymiyya (Appendix 8).

[147] This term is also used in Ismāʿīlism; see B. Lewis, *The Origins of Ismāʿīlism* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1940), pp. 50–54.

[148] Ibid., p. 55.

limited period in Shīʿism). At a later stage, an initiate who betrays his master or does not obey him is expelled, an act which is compared to divorce (*ṭalāq*).[149] The second stage is also compared with pregnancy (*ḥaml*), and as such it should take between seven and nine months. If the initiate reaches maturity (*balagha 'l-ḥukm*) having studied a basic knowledge of *bāṭin*, he turns to the third level, called *samāʿ* (listening) in which he is compared to a newborn infant, and he is authorized to listen and also to speak in the sessions of the mystics for the first time. The beginning of his participation and his gradual study (*istidrāj*) and religious education (*tafaqquh*) of the *bāṭin*, which are compared to breast-feeding (*riḍāʿa*) and may take from one to two years, depends on the initiate's ability. Already at this stage he is considered to have *najwā* (salvation), since he is saved from eternal transmigrations and is at the beginning of his journey to the world of light.[150] For the calculation of time, the *naqīb* must write the exact date of the beginning of the initiate's *samāʿ*.[151] In extraordinary cases, a talented initiate would pass the "breast-feeding" stage in less than one year and would be permitted to teach. An example of this is the short period of initiation of ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Jisrī.[152]

The process of initiation may be summed up as follows:

a. *khuṭba* (engagement)—a few meetings: *ʿahd* > learning of the *ẓāhir* > first presence in a mystic's session for the drinking of *sār/saʾr*—the *ʿabd al-nūr*.
b. *zawāj/nikāḥ* (marriage) and *ḥaml* (pregnancy)—between 7 and 9 months: *taʿlīq* (attachment) > learning of the *wadīʿa* (deposit, mainly the *Dustūr*).
c. *samāʿ* (listening) and *riḍāʿa* (breast-feeding)—one or (more commonly) two years: *istidrāj* (gradual study) and *tafaqquh* (mystical religious studies of the *bāṭin*).

Unlike the Ismāʿīlī example, the age of the initiate is not limited, and may be from fifteen to sixty.[153] Unlike in Ismāʿīlism, women were never permitted to be initiates or to participate in sessions. Slaves,

[149] Ibid., pp. 50–55.
[150] Ibid., pp. 54–56.
[151] Ibid., p. 60.
[152] Ibid., p. 51.
[153] Ibid., p. 54; *BD*, pp. 47–49, 145.

however, were allowed to be initiated, since according to Nuṣayrī tradition Joseph and Salmān were initiated after being freed from slavery. Because both of them were *ashkhāṣ*, personifications of the divinity, their acts serve as an example for the believers.[154] The instructor should choose his disciple as carefully as he would choose his wife. The disciple may leave his teacher, an act called *hijra* (emigration), if his teacher seems inappropriate.[155]

The relationship between the instructor and the initiate is that of father and son. The initiation always includes a ceremony of *akhdh al-ubuwwa* (acceptance of spiritual paternity). But this fatherhood is only spiritual and the initiate does not change his name or *nasab*. An initiate is permitted, for example, to marry his instructor's daughter, and if the instructor dies, it is his initiate, not his biological son, who inherits his mystical books.[156] This spiritual fatherhood also exists in Ismāʿīlī texts such as that of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ.[157]

Apart from the direct instructor, the *ʿālim* (learned man) and the *walad* (child, the initiate), the sessions would always include a *jamāʿa* (group of initiates), which includes the *ikhwān* (brothers); a leader of ceremonies, called *imām*, who is the highest religious authority, and who must memorize the Qurʾān, the *quddāsāt* and the rest of the prayers; and an instructor, called *naqīb*, who should be the link between the mystics and the new initiate. For this reason the *naqīb*, as well as the *ʿālim*, must be gentle to the initiate and use persuasion rather than force. The *naqīb* must have a basic education, which enables him to date every stage the initiate has achieved, while the *imām* is obliged to possess the highest knowledge of his community. The sessions cannot be held without the presence of the *imām* who leads the ceremonies.[158] None of the participants in the sessions can be a non-Muslim, a member or follower of the Umayyad or ʿAbbāsid families (considered *aḍdād*), or someone working with impure materials, such as a seller of leather, or a grave digger. People with disabilities may participate, though not as *imām*s, since al-Khaṣībī and Muḥammad ibn Sinān before him were blind when they were old and were able to teach

[154] *HIF*, p. 50.
[155] Ibid., pp. 57–59.
[156] Ibid.
[157] See more details in Lewis, *The Origins of Ismāʿīlism*, pp. 44–49.
[158] Ibid., pp. 70–73. Compare with *BS*, pp. 36–37. According to al-Adhanī, there is also a *najīb*, who serves the *naqīb*.

mysticism.[159] All prayers can be performed while sitting except in the times of drinking of *ʿabd al-nūr* and the "spiritual paternity", which demand standing because of their special significance.[160] The initiates must maintain a pure way of life, and stay away from material temptations that may prevent their salvation.[161] They must not be late to the sessions when the *imām* summons them.[162] Al-Ṭabarānī permitted the initiation of Jews or Christians who had converted to Islam, but such persons could not serve as *imām*s. He also authorized the initiation of converts who did not reveal their conversion to their own families. However, he emphasized that only a true Muslim and a true convert can be exalted to the world of light.[163] An instructor may teach a group of initiates together. Since a man may marry four women in the *ẓāhir* a shaykh can instruct nine initiates in the *bāṭin* sense of "marriage".[164] The sessions can take place in the house of the *imām*, the *naqīb*, or any other mystic of the sect, as long as the place is secret. The *jamāʿa* should sit in a circle and pass the wine and the salt clockwise and counter-clockwise during ceremonies of *quddās* (mass).[165]

4.2 *Two versions of the* Dustūr: *al-Ṭabarānī and al-Adhanī*

During the sessions a document called *Dustūr* (code of laws) is read. This document contains the main prayer taught by the instructor and must be memorized by the initiate to ensure his salvation. If an initiate forgets it, he is not permitted to study it again, since this would be like a child returning to breast-feeding.[166] Al-Ṭabarānī cites only one line from the mysterious *Dustūr*, and mentions chapters from it by their title. This is where he authorizes initiates with a weak memory to abbreviate some parts of the *Dustūr*, except for one line of the Sūrat al-Shahāda, which must not be omitted. This line is two verses from the Qurʾān stating that there is no other God but Allāh and that Islam is the only religion for God (citing from Qurʾān, Āl ʿImrān [3]: 18–19).

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[159] *HIF*, pp. 61, 66–71.
[160] Ibid., p. 75.
[161] Ibid., pp. 75–79. The worst acts are lying, committing adultery, drinking wine that is not *ʿabd al-nūr*, and card playing.
[162] Ibid., p. 79.
[163] Ibid., pp. 89–90.
[164] Ibid., p. 48.
[165] Ibid., pp. 110–111.
[166] Ibid., p. 66.

He adds also that the *Fātiḥa* can be abbreviated only if its meaning is understood, and the initiate can memorize the chain of "parents", i.e. shaykhs, without their complete names.[167] In another place in his book, al-Ṭabarānī notes that the *Shahāda* contains the *ʿayn-mīm-sīn* formula, which is studied while the *Dustūr* is read.[168] This is the only occurrence of this formula in the available Nuṣayrī documents. This mention of the *Dustūr* in the eleventh century seems to confirm the authenticity of al-Adhanī's document, also called *Dustūr*, to which he gives the title *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 7).[169] This name signifies that it is the *majmūʿ* (sum), a collection of the main theological issues and prayers for the initiate, preparing him for the study of the other and more detailed secret books when he complete his initiation. The similarity between the *Dustūr* of the eleventh century and that of the nineteenth, the *Majmūʿ*, is striking. Al-Ṭabarānī's citation from the Sūrat al-Shahāda is identical to al-Adhanī's citation from *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* (*sūra* 11), which contains both the same Qurʾānic verse and the Nuṣayrī triad.[170] The *Fātiḥa* (not to be confused with the first chapter of the Qurʾān) is also a chapter that exists in the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* (*Sūra* 5).[171] The chain of transmission of the secret going back through a long list of shaykhs to the founder of the sect to the Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, which al-Ṭabarānī demands be memorized, also appears in the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* (*Sūrat al-nisba* [4]).[172] It may be concluded that the *Dustūr* of Sulaymān al-Adhanī from the nineteenth century contains several original parts that existed in the time of al-Jillī and al-Ṭabarānī. Although these few resemblances may confirm this conclusion, it is still not possible to determine the identity of the original compiler of this book. In the *Majmūʿ*, all the founders of the sect are sanctified, which may indicate that some parts of the available Dustūr were written after the eleventh century. In addition, there is no explanation for the fact that some of the masses mentioned by al-Ṭabarānī, such as *quddās al-milḥ* (salt) and *quddās al-ṭaʿām* (meal),[173] do not appear in modern Nuṣayrī sources. We can only conclude that the

167 Ibid., p. 106.
168 Ibid., p. 50; compare with *BS*, pp. 3, 14.
169 This can be concluded from *BS*, pp. 88, 92.
170 *BS*, pp. 26–27.
171 Ibid., pp. 18–19.
172 Ibid., pp. 14–15.
173 *HIF*, p. 111.

actual *Dustūr* (see summary, Appendix 7) is similar but not identical to that which existed in the period of al-Ṭabarānī.

Al-Ṭabarānī's *Ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā* provides no answers to other interesting questions. For example, on what occasions should sessions take place besides new initiations and holidays? Can a session begin without a *naqīb*? What is the fate of an initiate who reveals the secrets? Since the book leaves many questions open, there is reason to believe that there were more books of initiation that have been lost or are unavailable. Al-Ṭabarānī explains that his book as well as the *Dustūr* were based not only on his master's *fatāwā*, but also on two books written by Ibn Nuṣayr, which seem to be the fundamental guides in the issue of initiation: *Kitāb al-kāfī li-'l-ḍidd al-munāfī* and *Kitāb al-mawārid*.[174]

4.3 *Terminology of initiation as a characteristic of secret societies*

Although the details of the initiation seem to characterize the Nuṣayrī sect exclusively, its terminology seems to typify secret societies in the Muslim world. Bernard Lewis's study of the guilds of craftsmen and merchants in the Middle East is most significant here. Terminology similar to that found in Nuṣayrī mystical sessions was used in these socio-economic organizations. Lewis bases his study on information concerning the structure of the Muslim guilds from the tenth century onwards. He finds a link between the creation of the guild and the formation of sects, both representing the creation of a group with an autonomous law code and that defends its members against the authorities. The Qarmaṭians are a good example of a group that combined religious sectarianism with social protest. Lewis explains that in many cases, the guild was run as a religious brotherhood that embraced a Qarmaṭian process of initiation and Ṣūfī ideology. The code of rules, customs, and ceremonials in every guild was called *Dustūr*, a Persian word meaning code of law. The guild was headed by a shaykh, who had a deputy called a *naqīb*. Some of the guilds had ceremonies of initiation and even a catechism. These guilds existed until the twentieth century in Anatolia and Syria, in the same regions inhabited by the Nuṣayrīs. The apprentices had to swear an oath of secrecy, to pass a series of stages, until finally they achieved mastery of the craft

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[174] *HIF*, pp. 53, 105, 112.

and became part of the guild, and were then given a higher salary.[175] Lewis's research is mostly relevant for the explanation of Nuṣayrī terminology and the structure of the secret sessions of the mystics and their initiates.

4.4 *Initiation in modern sources*

The sources concerning initiation into Nuṣayrīsm that were used by Lyde, Dussaud and Halm confirm the continuation of the same principles of initiation until the nineteenth century. However, their sources contain some elements which are absent in al-Ṭabarānī's *Ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā* and may reflect later developments. The document *Sharḥ al-imām* seems to contain Ismāʿīlī influence, since some of the Nuṣayrī terms are also called by their Ismāʿīlī equivalents, such as the addition of *dāʿī* (instructor) alongside *wālid* and *sayyid, ʿahd* (commitment to secrecy) as well as *mīthāq*, and *amāna* (deposit) as well as *wadīʿa*.[176] Also, the use of the term *Umm al-kitāb* for God's sacred book may be an allusion to Jābir's book, an important early Ismāʿīlī document.[177] The *Sharḥ al-imām* provides some important aspects of the role of the *imām*, which are missing in al-Ṭabarānī's book. The *imām* must possess the quality of a ruler who sets an example to his followers, to be "complete in earthly as well as spiritual matters" (*kāmil al-dīn wa-'l-dunyā*), compassionate and patient with his disciples and initiates, righteous, honest, and conducting a pious life.[178] In this text the two terms *saʾr* and *sirr* appear together, complementing each other. At the end of the *taʿlīq*, if the initiate is willing to continue to the second stage of the initiation, he drinks what is left in the glass of the *imām*, of the instructor and of the "brothers" and declares: "This is what is left from your religion and your belief, I am your slave and under your instructions", and then kisses the hands and legs of all those present. Then the participants drink another glass called *sirr al-qabūl* (secret of the acceptance) and hand what is left in their glass to the initiate, declaring: "Here is your *saʾr* which is your *sirr al-qabūl*"![179] According

[175] B. Lewis, "The Islamic guilds", in B. S. Turner (ed.), *Readings in Orientalism* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 500–519.
[176] Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1540, fol. 156a–157a, 159a, 166a, b.
[177] Ibid., fol. 159b.
[178] Ibid., fol. 157a–158a.
[179] Ibid., fol. 159b–160a.

to this document, the drinking of the *saʾr* symbolizes the completion of the education of the initiate by studying the secret. What is left in the glass represents the *bāṭin*, which is the education that the initiate has to complete in order to be a *muwaḥḥid*. The intimate act of drinking from the same glass signifies that the knowledge of his master is transmitted to the initiate who will carry on his role in the future. It is important to note that in order to ensure the success of the initiation, the Nuṣayrīs always give a choice as to whether to continue or not with the initiation, according to the Muslim principle of *lā ikrāh fī ʾl-dīn* (there is no compulsion in religion, Qurʾān, al-Baqara [2]: 256).[180] However, after the "marriage" (the second stage) an initiate who leaves his instructor is regarded as an unfaithful wife, cursed in heaven and excommunicated on earth. Yet, if he regrets doing so, he is forgiven and may continue his initiation, because *mutʿa* is authorized in Shīʿism.[181] The ceremonies of *quddās* are also mentioned in Lyde's *Kitāb al-mashyakha*, whose contents differ from other sources, mainly concerning the divine nature of ʿAlī and world of light, since the book is a general guide for the shaykh and not only for the rites of initiation.[182] The *Kitāb al-mashyakha* mentions al-Ṭabarānī's book of *fatāwa* as its main source for initiation.[183] The most important part of this document is Lyde's translation of the contents of the *ʿahd*, the contract between the initiate and the instructor. In this contract, the initiate swears to be loyal to his instructor, to share his knowledge with his "brothers", and not to reveal the secret to non-initiates. The *imām* warns the initiate that revealing the secret religion will cause him to be cursed by eternal transmigrations. The initiate swears to meet his instructor once a year, to fast during Ramaḍān, and to pay alms.[184] Since the text of the *ʿahd* which precedes the "drinking of the secret" is almost identical to that appearing in *Sharḥ al-imām*,[185] it can be assumed that the shaykhs used a written text in the initiation, and that its reading before the *majlis* is the speech called *khiṭāb*.

A similar process of initiation is described by al-Adhanī in his *Bākūra*, but from another point of view. This time it is an account of

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180 Ibid., fol. 160a.
181 Ibid., fol. 160b, 165a, b.
182 *KMA*, pp. 247–253.
183 Ibid., p. 269.
184 Ibid., pp. 256–264.
185 Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1540, fol. 163b–166b.

the initiate, not the description of the *imām*. Al-Adhanī's description of the initiation is very problematic in some parts, because it is a hostile report containing negative elements, which are probably untrue since they do not appear in any other source of the sect. Al-Adhanī was not asked at any stage if he wanted to continue, his instructors were constantly changed,[186] he was warned that he would be killed and would not be buried in the ground if he disclosed the secrets of the sect, mainly the *Dustūr*,[187] and finally accused the members of the sect of adultery.[188] At the end of his book he calls Nuṣayrism "a pagan religion" (*dīn wathanī*),[189] a view that he tried to prove in his book, and that would eventually be used as the thesis of Dussaud. If the warning of the *imām* to al-Adhanī is taken as true evidence, then the reason for the worsening of the punishment of the unfaithful initiate from excommunication to death was due to the Christian missionaries and their threat against the sect in that period.

4.5 *The Nuṣayrī brotherhood*

The ceremony of *akhdh al-ubuwwa* (acceptance of fatherhood) is a ceremony in initiation in which the teacher becomes the spiritual father of the initiate, who is his spiritual child. This part of the initiation is one of the most important components of the Nuṣayrī religious identity. The sect is a spiritual family from the time of its creation, because the bond between its members is the deep mystical connection of a group that considers itself as one unit of light imprisoned in the material world. This is why all the books of initiation repeat the obligation of the initiates to treat their coreligionists as brothers. The idea of a religious brotherhood is the application of the Qurʾānic verse: "The believers are brothers" (Qurʾān, al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 10). This brotherhood is a characteristic of Ṣūfī groups. Julian Baldick translates the term describing the Ṣūfī order, the *ṭarīqa*, as a "brotherhood".[190] In Nuṣayrism, the concept of a religious family is developed to the extent that a teacher of the initiate's teacher is considered a grandfather (*jadd*), and other disciples who are on the same level as himself are

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[186] *BS*, p. 3.
[187] Ibid., pp. 5–6.
[188] Ibid., pp. 93–94.
[189] Ibid., p. 110.
[190] J. Baldick, *Mystical Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989), p. 112.

his brothers (*ikhwān*). For example, Ibn Nuṣayr is called al-Khaṣībī's grandfather because he is the master of his initiator al-Jannān. The latter is seen as the father (*wālid*) of al-Khaṣībī.[191] Al-Khaṣībī's disciples are considered the brothers[192] and children (*awlād*, sing. *walad*) of their master.[193] Al-Khaṣībī's *Rāstbāsh* epistle is dedicated to his "children", the mystics.[194] Al-Jillī explains in several books that his knowledge derives from his "father" and master al-Khaṣībī.[195] The poet al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī calls the Banū Numayr/Namīr "brothers" and the anonymous Hālit he calls "the cousin" of al-Khaṣībī,[196] since Hālit is the "brother" of Jannān, and both are "sons" of their mutual master Ibn Jundab.[197] To sum up, spiritual fatherhood, which is an important component of initiation, gives the Nuṣayrī sect the character of a spiritual family. As such, their obligation of mutual respect, that of *birr al-ikhwān*, was not only important for maintaining the initiations and the mystic sessions, but was also one of the crucial conditions for the survival of the Nuṣayrī sect until the present.

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191 *RIA*, p. 297.

192 *BS*, p. 17, 47; *KBS*, p. 271; *WJAS*, p. 41.

193 Ibid., p. 29.

194 *RR*, pp. 16–17.The main "son" was the Buwayhid Bakhtiyār. Brockelmann wrongly believed him to be a biological son of al-Khaṣībī; see C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litterarur* (Leiden: Brill, 1937–1942), vol. 4, p. 326.

195 See, for example, *KBS*, p. 271; *ARM*, p. 14.

196 *DMA*, fol. 148b.

197 Ibid., fol. 124b, 155b, 247b.

CONCLUSION

The most interesting phenomenon in the history of the Nuṣayrīs is their ability to survive more than a thousand years in a region of permanent wars, as a small minority lacking arms for most of that time and considered heretical by those surrounding them. It is certain that their first means of survival was their gradual migration from Iraq to Syria, and inside Syria from urban centers to rural and mountainous territories. The fact that during most of the medieval period they found patrons and defenders prompts second thoughts about the well-accepted hypothesis that they were viewed as heretics from the time of their emergence. The survival of the Nuṣayrīs may indicate a certain amount of toleration of religious minorities. Persecutions of the sect by the Muslim authorities intensified only in the Mamlūk period. the general process of Muslim radicalization in the late medieval period could be studied by examining the Muslim attitude towards the Nuṣayrī sect. However, this explanation is not enough to answer the difficult question of how they survived, since many other sects found in medieval heresiographical literature did not survive. The strength of the Nuṣayrī sect stems from the special legacy of the founders of the sect and the power of their esoteric belief, which unified the Nuṣayrīs in difficult times. In other words, it is not weapons and military leaders that gave them their strength but rather their identity and their historical legacy, as well as their belief that they belong to a group of exalted believers who are closer to God than others.

1. *The question of external influences*

The question of the sources of inspiration for the Nuṣayrī religion is an example of one of the most complicated problems in the study of religions in general, that of the bases of a religion's components. It is reasonable to conclude, with Massignon and Halm, that the main theological resource was "internal", not "external"; that is, the sect was created from within Shīʿī Islam developed in the mystical atmosphere of medieval Kufa. However, it is clear in the Nuṣayrī texts that their mysticism is of a universal nature, corresponding to its message that

all religions represent a different *ẓāhir* but have a common *bāṭin*. In other words, God appeared to every culture with the same mystical message, but in the form of different persons (*ashkhāṣ*): God appeared to humanity beginning with Adam through the Jews, the Greeks, the Christians, the Persians and finally the Arabs. It is this multicultural nature of Nuṣayrī theology that gives the researcher the impression that he is dealing with a typical syncretist phenomenon. The actual research enables an understanding of how Muslims came into contact with their surrounding religions.

1.1 *Greek philosophy and Judaism*

Iraq was the main scene of the development of both Judaism and Shīʿism in the medieval Islamic world. Islam inherited Hellenistic culture and the Christian religion in the west (Syria and Egypt) and Persian culture and the Zoroastrian religion in the east (Iraq and Persia). In the seaport of Basra, Muslims also came into contact with merchants from India and were introduced to Hinduism and other Indian beliefs. In the north of Syria (Ḥarrān), Muslims were introduced to ideas from antiquity preserved in Hellenistic culture, mainly Greek philosophy and Neoplatonism. In this region, as in the famous Baghdadian Bayt al-Ḥikma, the Muslims encountered Greek philosophy not through merchants but thanks to the long process of translating Greek writings into Arabic.[1] Another significant source of inspiration for medieval Nuṣayrīsm was Persian culture and religions that became known to Muslims mainly by translations of important Pahlavi texts by officials and administrators in the caliphal court and by the mass conversions of Persian *mawālī* to Islam.[2]

Jewish components are rarely found in Nuṣayrī literature. Jewish mysticism is sometimes alluded to but is not explicit in Nuṣayrīsm. Jewish influence seems to be indirect, a general influence on Shīʿism, not specifically on Nuṣayrism (admiration for the descendants of King David may have inspired the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*, for example). Moreover, in many cases, similar components in Nuṣayrism

[1] Concerning the translation of Greek writings into Arabic in the medieval Muslim world and in Ḥarrān specifically, see D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th / 8th–10th centuries)* (Routledge, 1998), pp. 23–27.

[2] Yarshater, "The Persian presence in the Islamic world", pp. 4–7.

and Judaism do not necessarily reflect influence, but rather a mutual source of inspiration, which is usually Greek philosophy. Neoplatonic terminology appears in several places in Nuṣayrī literature. The sect shared a Neoplatonic view of the cosmos with other mystical Muslims such as Ṣūfī thinkers (Ibn ʿArabī, Suhrawardī) and Ismāʿīlī groups (Fāṭimids, Druzes). For example, the *maʿnā* and the *ism* appear in Nuṣayrī texts as *al-ʿaql al-kullī* (universal mind) and *al-nafs al-kulliyya* (universal spirit).[3] The great Greek philosophers are considered divine personifications: the *maʿnā* and the *ism* and the *bāb* appeared to the Greeks in the form of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.[4] It is interesting to note that it was the Nuṣayrīs in Ḥarrān, an important center of Greek translation into Arabic, who were the ones most inspired by Greek philosophy. Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī, in his *Risālat ikhtilāf al-ʿālamayn* presents other personalities from ancient Greece who are the personifications of the *aytām*.[5] In many cases, Nuṣayrīs use Greek logic to back their doctrines. For example, ʿAlī ibn Ḥamza al-Ḥarrānī cites Aristotle's hypothesis that every burning fire must be connected to an object, in order to explain that every existing soul must be connected to a living body.[6] ʿAlī al-Ḥarrānī explains the world of light by the ideal "world of the mind" (*ʿālam al-ʿaql*) of Plato.[7]

1.2 *Christian inspiration*

While the question of Jewish influence on Nuṣayrism has been almost overlooked, the question of Christian influence on the sect raised many polemical debates among scholars. The association of Christian components with Nuṣayrism may invite the risk of superficial methods of research. The similarity between Nuṣayrism and Christianity is deceptive: the name Nuṣayriyya in Arabic is similar to the Arabic word *Naṣārā* (Christians); the Nuṣayrī triad is reminiscent of the Christian Trinity; and the Nuṣayrīs' admiration of Jesus and the apostles can easily be considered a Christian tendency. The Nuṣayrīs even celebrate Christian holidays. However, all these similarities are external. A careful

3 See, for example, *FRR*, p. 125; *MHIS*, p. 190.
4 *JK*, p. 36; *RIA*, p. 291.
5 *RIA*, pp. 291–292.
6 *HAIH*, p. 268.
7 Ibid., p. 279.

study of the Nuṣayrī religion leads to the conclusion that these components are Christian only in appearance.

To begin with, the name Nuṣayriyya derives from Ibn Nuṣayr and cannot be a derivation of *Naṣārā* according to Arabic grammar.[8] The Nuṣayrī triad was created by emanations and its hierarchical structure is different from the equal nature of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[9] Other fundamental ideas in Christianity, such as the incarnation of the divinity in the human Christ and Jesus' crucifixion are totally rejected in Nuṣayrism. Nuṣayrism contains "Islamized Christianity", an admiration for the Qurʾānic Jesus who was not crucified. Although the Nuṣayrīs elevate the human Jesus to the level of the divine *ism*, according to the principle of Docetism his appearance is through illusion and not incarnation. As opposed to Christian belief, Jesus' blood was not spilt and his goal was not to pardon humanity by his suffering, but rather to call the believers to accept the *maʿnā*'s divinity. The Shīʿī–Gnostic content of the Christian holidays that are celebrated by the Nuṣayrīs is another indication that Christianity may have been a source of inspiration only for Nuṣayrī terminology and symbols, but did not have any significant influence on its theological tenets.

Al-Jillī's *Risāla al-Masīḥiyya* (epistle of the *masīḥ* [Jesus], not to be translated as "the Christian Epistle") may serve as one of the main indications for the rejection of the hypothesis of Christian influence on Nuṣayrism. In this epistle, al-Jillī tries to create an artificial mystical bond between Nuṣayrism and Christianity. For example, when discussing the symbol of the cross, he explains that its four edges represent the four letters of the Arabic word *ṣalīb* (cross), the four letters of the Arabic names of the prophets Mūsā (Moses), ʿĪsā (Jesus) and Muḥammad as well as the four parts of the *basmala* lā ilāha illā ʿLlāh (1.There is no 2. other God 3. but 4. Allāh):[10]

Lā

ilāha + illā

Allāh

[8] This fact was noted by Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairīs*, pp. 9–10.
[9] Ibid., p. 67.
[10] *RM*, pp. 290–291.

Al-Jillī also explains that the life of Jesus contains mystical messages. For example, his baptism symbolizes initiation into esoteric knowledge, his twelve apostles represent the twelve *nuqabāʾ* in the world of light, and the illusion of his crucifixion (Docetism) is meant to test the believers as did the illusion of the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn.[11] It was not Jesus who was crucified, but Judas—a docetic view that is also found in other Muslim sources.[12]

The quotations or quasi-quotations from the Gospels in Arabic in the Nuṣayrī sources do not represent a Christian influence either. Bar-Asher and Kofsky, who tried to prove Christian influence on Nuṣayrī theology, could not locate quotations from the canonical Gospels in medieval writings of the sect and admitted that the citations of Jesus are based merely on apocryphal Gospels.[13] More quotations of this kind are found in other Nuṣayrī sources, mainly al-Jillī's *Risāla al-Masīḥiyya* and the sermons of Jesus at the end of Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba's *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*.[14] In some cases the citations are reminiscent of the style of the canonic Gospels but they are not identical, for example the sermon of Jesus at the end of *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl*, which recalls the Sermon on the Mount.[15] It may be assumed that the Nuṣayrī authors cited an old original Christian Gospel from the tenth century, which is different from the one used today. Yet it seems more likely that the Nuṣayrī citations from what they call *al-injīl* (from the Greek world *euangelion*, good message, the Gospels) are based on what Tarif Khalidi called the "Muslim Gospels". Khalidi explains in his book *The Muslim Jesus* that medieval Muslim sources contain a large amount of scattered fragments from Gospels that are not found in Christian literature. These are sayings and stories of Jesus reflecting his personality as pictured in Islam, not Christianity. Khalidi tries to trace the roots of these Gospels in Hellenistic civilization within the Islamic world, and outside, in the surrounding Christian communities. He considers them apocryphal

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[11] *RM*, pp. 288, 300.

[12] See, for example, T. Andrae, *In the Garden of Myrtles*: *Studies in Early Mysticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 24–26.

[13] Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, pp. 44, 70.

[14] See, for example, the quasi-citation from Matthew and Luke, in *RM*, pp. 290–291; *TU* (God's words to Jesus), pp. 304–37, (Jesus' sermon to the believers), pp. 307–316.

[15] Compare the Arabic speech of Jesus in *TU*, pp. 307–316 with the much shorter and vaguely similar Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:3 to 7:27. I wish to thank Dr. David Cook for calling my attention to this interesting similarity.

and in some cases Muslim compositions echoing canonical Gospels.[16] It is worth noting Khalidi's assumption that the Muslim Gospels were written in the Shīʿī milieu of ninth-century Kufa.[17] Included in this literature are al-Jillī's bizarre citations of Nestorius concerning the *ghayba* of Jesus[18] and Nestorius's statement that everyone who knows Jesus is saved (in Shīʿism an attribute of the Imām).[19]

It is easy to suspect, from a historical point of view, that the goal of citing the "Muslim Jesus" or the "Shīʿī Nestorius" was to ease the conversion of Christians and specifically Nestorian Christians (spread throughout Syria, Iraq and Iran) to Nuṣayrism rather than to add a Christian aspect to Nuṣayrī theology.

In this context, the essay by Bar-Asher concerning what he calls the "Christian elements in the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī religion" is helpful. A previous attempt to prove the Christian nature of Nuṣayrīsm was initiated by the Jesuit orientalist Henri Lammens in the nineteenth century.[20] Probably motivated by missionary purposes, he considered the Nuṣayrīs "lost Christians". His methods of research were very problematic, involving field research for Christian remnants in territories inhabited by the sect. No less problematic was his extensive use of sources from his period, which reflect the situation in the nineteenth century when the Nuṣayrīs were the object of Christian missionary influence. It is in this light that the appearance of a Nuṣayrī and Druze catechism in the nineteenth century must be explained. It should also kept in mind that al-Adhanī wrote his *Bākūra* after he had converted to Christianity. Bar-Asher's methods, based on textual research, are also problematic. His assumption that Docetism is an indication of a Christian component is unacceptable, since it already appears in the Qurʾān.[21] Bar-Asher does not provide enough evidence for his exaggerated statement that: "Beginning from the fourth/tenth century we find in the Nuṣayrī writings almost all the doctrines which are influenced by Christianity such as in the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* of al-Ṭabarānī". But

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[16] T. Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Saying and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 3–46.

[17] Ibid., p. 39.

[18] *RM*, pp. 294–295.

[19] Ibid., p. 296.

[20] H. Lammens, "Les Noṣairīs furent-ils chrétiens? A propos d'un livre récent", *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 5 (1900), pp. 33–50.

[21] M. M. Bar-Asher, "Sur les éléments chrétiens de la religion Nusayrite-Alawite", *Journal Asiatique* 289/2 (2001), p. 189.

he continues by explaining that in this last source the only Christian component is the celebration of Christmas, and that most of the other Christian components he discusses appear in the nineteenth-century *Bākūra* of al-Adhanī and the catechism mentioned earlier.[22] Bar-Asher mentions the Christian term *quddās* as another Christian component in Nuṣayrism, based again only on these modern sources. But on this last point his assumption proved to be true, since the term *quddās* appears in the recently available medieval source, al-Ṭabarānī's *Ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā*. Here the Nuṣayrī initiates are obligated to know by heart three *quddāsāt* (pl. of *quddās*, mass): the *quddās al-bākhūr* (mass of the incense), which is also found in the modern *Bākūra*,[23] the *quddās al-zād* (mass of the provisions) and the *quddās al-milḥ* (mass of the salt), whose contents are unknown.[24] Nevertheless, the drinking of wine, used in the Nuṣayrī *majlis* of the shaykhs and in initiation does not represent the blood of Jesus, as in Christianity.[25]

Bar-Asher mentions the heresiographer al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) in his article, although in his discussion of the Nuṣayrī sect al-Shahrastānī does not attribute to them any Christian component, but rather a kind of dualistic divinity of the light of ʿAlī and Muḥammad.[26] Based on the great quantity of old and new sources used in this book, Bar-Asher's assumption concerning the existence of a Nuṣayrī concept of incarnation, a term totally rejected by al-Khaṣībī and his followers, is unacceptable.[27] On sound ground, however, is his hypothesis of Christian influence with regard to the holiness of Fāṭima and al-Ḥusayn, which

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[22] Ibid., pp. 189–190. Bar-Asher admits that the use of the Christian term *thālūth* (trinity) is extremely rare in medieval writings of the Nuṣayrīs and appears only in the twelfth-century *Munāẓara* (*MN*, fol. 89b, 92a). He also admits that citations from the canonical Gospels, which can be found in the nineteenth-century catechism, do not appear in any of the medieval writings of the sect. See ibid., p. 191 note 14.

[23] *BS*, pp. 39–40.

[24] *HIF*, p. 72.

[25] Al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī is the only Nuṣayrī mystic who uses the expression "drinking the blood of Jesus". It occurs in one of his poems in the context of his prayers towards Mecca, as a symbol of a mystical experience; see Nwyia, "Makzūn al-Sinjārī, poète mystique alaouite", p. 111. The only Nuṣayrī source mentioning the blood of Jesus in the context of the meaning of the *quddās* (mass) is in the late Nuṣayrī Catechism, influenced by the nineteenth-century Christian missionaries in Syria; see *TDN*, pp. 216–217.

[26] Bar-Asher, "Sur les élements chrétiens", p. 199; Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-'l-niḥal*, p. 193.

[27] Bar-Asher, ibid., p. 205.

is inspired by the Christian holiness of Mary and Jesus.[28] Nevertheless, this similarity reflects Christian influence on Shīʿism in general, not on Nuṣayrism specifically.

Christian components in Nuṣayrism are limited to terminology of certain rituals and do not include fundamental Christian doctrines. On the contrary, Nuṣayrī leaders made an effort to deny any connection with Christianity. For example, al-Jillī explains in his *Risāla al-nuʿmāniyya* the difference between the hierarchical nature of the divine triad and the equal nature of the Christian Trinity:

> The status of the *ism* with regard to the *maʿnā* is such as that of the look with regard to the watching, and that of the speech with regard to the speaker and movement with regard to passivity. He [God] is neither the entire look nor all the speech. Because if we were to say "all of him" we would diminish him and consider him incapable of speaking through anything but himself [and he can speak through his *ism* or his *bāb]*. If we were to claim so [that God can speak only through his essence] we would certainly mix the *ism* with the *maʿnā* and the *maʿnā* with the *ism*. In such a case we would be obliged to mix them also with the *sīn* [Salmān, the *bāb*] as well. If we were to believe in this [mixing the three aspects of God as if they were equal] we would be like those who believe in a trinity and become Christians and be excluded from monotheism [*fa-nakūnu min aṣḥāb al-thālūth wa-naṣīru ka-'l-naṣārā wa-nakhruju min ḥadd al-tawḥīd*]. God preserve us!

In one of his poems, al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī attacks a Christian monk, saying: "Your triple monotheism is a contradiction of monotheism" (*tawḥīduka fī 'l-tathlīth li-'l-tawḥīd ḍidd*).[29] The combination of the negative attitude towards Christianity and the admiration of the Muslim Jesus leads to the conclusion that the only possible Christian inspiration on Nuṣayrism derives from the influence of Christianity on Islam in general and on Shīʿism in particular. In addition, there is no indication of any direct contacts between Christian and Nuṣayrī scholars or any converted Christians influencing Nuṣayrī theology.

1.3 *Zoroastrian influence*

The study of the Persian influence on Nuṣayrism leads to different conclusions. There are indications that some leaders of the sect (al-Jannān

[28] Ibid., pp. 206, 210.
[29] *DMS*, p. 86.

is the most important example) were of Persian origin. Al-Ṭabarānī admits that he had received "Persian epistles" which seem to have been the source for the Persian terms, words and names combined in some prayers he composed.[30] Bar-Asher's important article on the Persian components of Nuṣayrī religion merits strong endorsement.[31] Bar-Asher notes that the source of the cult of wine (*ʿabd al-nūr*), derives from the Persian cult of light,[32] as opposed to the idea expressed in his earlier article that its source is in the Christian mass. He correctly concludes that the Persian components in Nuṣayrism are the result of the general renaissance of Persian culture in the Muslim world in the ninth and tenth centuries,[33] a thesis also advanced by other important scholars such as Amir-Moezzi and Yarshater.[34]

The most important connection of the Nuṣayrīs with Persians, which characterizes Shīʿism in general, is related to the personality of Salmān, *sayyid al-furs* (master of the Persians), the first Persian converted to Islam and the most loyal follower of ʿAlī.[35] Nevertheless, this Persian characteristic of Nuṣayrī theology represents a deviation from the fundamental obligation of Islam concerning the sanctity of the Arabic language and the obligation to pray only in Arabic. According to Nuṣayrī tradition, in the world of light Salmān ordered the *aytām* to communicate with the *ahl al-marātib* in seven languages, first in Persian and then in Arabic.[36] Al-Ṭabarānī's addition of Persian words to the prayer may represent his attempt to sanctify the Persian language, an effort that did not last after his death. In this context, it should be borne in mind that the available version of *Umm al-kitāb* was written in Persian and that the sanctification of the Persian language was an Ismāʿīlī characteristic.[37] Another typical Zoroastrian symbol in Nuṣayrism is

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[30] *MA*, p. 209.

[31] M. M. Bar-Asher, "The Iranian component of the Nuṣayrī religion", *Iran* 61 (2003), pp. 217–227.

[32] Ibid., p. 221.

[33] Ibid., pp. 222–223.

[34] M. A. Amir-Moezzi, "Shahrbānū, dame du pays d'Iran et mère des Imāms", *JSAI* 27 (2002), pp. 515–537; E. Yarshater, "Mazdakism", in E. Yarshater (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 991–1024.

[35] *AAN*, p. 112.

[36] Ibid., p. 202.

[37] H. Corbin, "Nāṣir-i Khusrau and Iranian Ismāʿīlism", in R. N. Frye (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), vol. 4, p. 531. In Imāmī literature, the Iranian language represents the Sassanian royal language. The Imām ʿAlī is said to combine command of both the language of sanctity and the

fire as a sacred purifying element. The meaning of fire is linked to the doctrine of *nidāʾ*, the docetic sacrifice of the *bāb*. According to Nuṣayrī tradition, ʿAlī gave the order to burn ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ together with his ten followers in holes dug in the desert, after the Ibn Sabaʾ declared ʿAlī's divinity. This terrible event, appearing also in Imāmī sources,[38] receives a mystical interpretation in Nuṣayrī theology based on the sanctity of fire in Zoroastrianism. The Imām did not intend to punish Ibn Sabaʾ but to prove his sanctity and purity. After burning him ʿAlī repeated five *takbīrāt* (sing. *takbīr*, declaration of the words *Allāhu akbar*, God is greater), which caused Ibn Sabaʾ and his followers to come back to life.[39] The same holy fire is explained by al-Khaṣībī as that from which the *ism* talked to Moses when he was first revealed to him and later to the Persians in the *qubba al-Fārisiyya*.[40]

Although the presence of Iranian components (Persian equinox holidays, Persian saints and words mentioned in prayers, dualism in several aspects of theology and sanctification of fire) seems more noticeable than that of unorthodox Christian components (an Islamized Christmas, admiration of a non-crucified Jesus, Docetism and apocryphal Gospels), it does not mean that the Nuṣayrīs embraced Zoroastrian or Manicheaen doctrines. The major principles of Zoroastrianism are absent from Nuṣayrī theology, such as dualism at the level of the divinity, the struggle between Ahura Mazda and Ahrimān (or Angra Mainyu) and the participation of human beings in this struggle through their choice between good and evil. Neither Ahura Mazda nor even Zarathustra himself ever appears in the sect's writings.[41] Although Nuṣayrism does contain a partition of the cosmos into good and evil, the cosmos is not based on the balance between good and evil spirits. In Nuṣayrī theology there is no active struggle between the two powers, since the good, which is Allāh, is the one and only ruler of the world. Evil rules only in the material world where

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language of royalty: Arabic and Persian. See Amir-Moezzi, "Shahrbānū, dame du pays d'Iran", pp. 515–516.

[38] Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 25, pp. 285–286. This tradition contradicts the information concerning Ibn Saba'''s deportation to al-Madāʾin; see al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, p. 22.

[39] *RR*, pp. 34–37; *FRR*, p. 108.

[40] *FRR*, pp. 91–92; *MS*, pp. 213–215, 226.

[41] See further explanations for this Zoroastrian doctrine in E. Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), pp. 35–39.

the believers were thrown in order to be punished and tested by God. At the end of time the material world will be eliminated and the role of evil will be over. However, leaders of the sect were aware of the strong Iranian presence in their religious texts and of the danger of a misunderstanding of their theology. They totally rejected the idea of dualism in the divinity. Both al-Khaṣībī and al-Jillī stressed the principle of a one and only God and refuted dualism by explaining that there is no separation between the two main aspects of the divinity, the *maʿnā* and the *ism*, which are as reason and result, or "as the sun and its beams" in Neoplatonic terms.[42] ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba focused on the impossibility of the coexistence of two Gods:

> If you were say that there are two [Gods], we would answer you [questioning]: are they passive or active [*ʿājizāni am qādirāni*]? If you were to say passive, we would answer that the creator is not characterized as passive. If you were to claim that both are active, we would reply to you: [if so,] can one of them prevent the action of the other? And if this is the case, each of them remains passive as result of the other's activity. If you were to claim that one of them is active and the other is passive, so the active is the ruler and the passive is the ruled one. If you were to say that they participated in the actions [for example:] one gives life and the other takes them, [we would reply that] the participation and the conciliation come only after the struggle, and in such a case [of participation] both would be passive in some matters, since neither of them would be capable of performing the entire action. One who is incapable cannot be the eternal. If you believe in a group of Gods [polytheism], you would meet the same difficulties as in proving God's duality. So here you were given the proof that there must be only one God.[43]

2. *Identity*

Nuṣayrism can be defined as a religion based on *taʾwīl* (allegorical interpretation) of God's sayings in the Qurʾān. The other holy books of the sect are the *bāṭin* (mysticism), the esoteric explanations of God's words in the Qurʾān. These explanations are attributed to the Imāms, according to the general Shīʿī belief that only they possess the gnosis, the inner knowledge that is the true interpretation of Muḥammad's

[42] *RN*, p. 304.
[43] *HAIH*, pp. 244–245.

message. The presence of Neoplatonic, Iranian, Christian and Jewish components in Nuṣayrism is not the result of the direct influence of these cultures and religions on members of the Nuṣayrīs sect, but rather of a long process over a period of three centuries, of the infiltration of ideas into Islam and into mystical Shīʿism in Iraq in particular. Their influence is already prominent in the writings of Shīʿī scholars such as Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, secret associations such as the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and above all the Ghulāt of Kufa and Basra (Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar in particular). Nevertheless, these components have different levels of infiltration into Nuṣayrī theology. While philosophical thought such as Neoplatonism and Gnosticism (Christian or Manichaean?) shaped the core of Nuṣayrī theology, religions such as Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Judaism remained at the margins. They were used as "decorative" elements; they were reshaped or altered completely in order to support original Nuṣayrī doctrines.

The most fundamental idea of Nuṣayrī religion is that ʿAlī appeared in the world to save humanity; he is the spiritual Noah's Ark.[44] The *ghulūw* (exaggeration/extremism) regarding Imāmī Shīʿism lies in the Nuṣayrī view of ʿAlī not as a human being but as a form through whom the divinity appeared. The Nuṣayrīs can be defined accordingly as the "party of ʿAlī", the Shīʿa. The sect was a continuation of the Ghulāt phenomenon, which lay at the center of Shīʿī activity and development. In this light, it is not difficult to understand the self-definition of the Nuṣayrīs not only as Muslims but also as the "true Shīʿa", since historically the sect was created from the group that was among the most intimate disciples of the last Imāms. The followers of these mystics, the Nuṣayrīs, are the only surviving group who has kept the traditions of the inner circle of the Imāms to this day. The imputation of heresy to the Nuṣayrī sect in most modern research is inappropriate, since it reflects only the view of Hanbalī Sunnism and conservative Shīʿism and not the view of all religious streams in Islam. While most Muslim scholars did not explicitly exclude the Nuṣayrīs from Islam, some Shīʿī scholars contented themselves with only mild criticism.

[44] The Imāms' *safīnat al-najāt* (saving boat, or ark of salvation) compared with the Ark of Noah is a well-known Shīʿī term. See, for example, in Nuṣayrī writings *ARM*, p. 25.

2.1 *Modern trends*

The modern period has witnessed tremendous changes in the definition of the ʿAlawīs and the attitude towards them in the Muslim world. These new trends do not reflect a change in Muslim theology, which is based on the medieval literature, but changes in Middle Eastern politics and reaction against Western threats. Still, the link between the ʿAlawīs and Islam contributed to the sect's integration in modern national and religious movements in the Middle East. In order to end their long isolation, the name of the sect was changed in the 1920s from Nuṣayriyya to ʿAlawiyya, "followers of ʿAlī", a synonym for Shīʿism. By taking this step, leaders of the sect expressed not only their link to Shīʿism, but to Islam in general. This change of identity was expressed in Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib al-Ṭawīl's new version of *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (history of the ʿAlawīs), which combines their history with that of Imāmī Shīʿism. The following step in the creation of a new image was a gradual denial of the previous Nuṣayrī identity. In his book, al-Ṭawīl attacked Sulaymān al-Adhanī, claiming that he was a drunkard and an immoral person who betrayed his sect, and after converting to Christianity had spread lies that the Nuṣayrīs were worshippers of idols.[45] This process of denial of the old identity intensified in the writings of the ʿAlawī shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Khayyir (d. 1986). He denied any connection of his sect with the name Nuṣayriyya, which according to him was a pejorative name used by the enemies of the sect, equivalent to the use of *rāfiḍa* for Shīʿīs and *nāsiba* for Sunnīs.[46] Al-Khayyir was followed in Syria by several shaykhs, who were pursuing Shīʿī religious studies to the complete neglect of their Nuṣayrī identity. Shaykh Maḥmūd al-Ṣāliḥ (d. 1998) is one example. He published his book *al-Nabaʾ al-yaqīn ʿan al-ʿAlawiyyīn*, where he claims that the terms ʿAlawī, Shīʿī, Jaʿfarī and Imāmī are synonymous.[47]

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[45] *TA*, pp. 447–448.

[46] *TA*, pp. 11, 57–59. His criticism of the *Taʾrīkh* of al-Ṭawīl was published separately in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Khayyir, *Naqd wa-taqriẓ kitāb taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (Damascus: Matbaʿat al-Inshāʾ, 1992). For his interesting meeting with Strothmann and his debate with him, see ibid., p. 65. As to al-Khayyir's claim that there is no difference between ʿAlawism and Imāmism, see also his *Yaqẓat al-Muslimīna ʾl-ʿAlawiyyīna fī maṭlaʿ al-qarn al-ʿashrīn* (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, 1996), pp. 11–24. For his objection to the division of *khāṣṣa* and *ʿāmma*, which he considers one reason for religious ignorance among the majority of the sect, see ibid., p. 36.

[47] Maḥmūd al-Ṣāliḥ, *al-Nabaʾ al-yaqīn ʿan al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (Lādhiqiyya: Dār al-Mirsāt, 1997), pp. 47–49.

It is in the light of the ʿAlawī embracing of the Imāmī identity that the reason for the publication of al-Khaṣībī's Imāmī book *al-Hidāya al-kubrā* in the 1980s in Lebanon should be understood. For the first time, it includes an apologetic introduction in which ʿAlawī shaykhs declare their Islamic identity. The manner in which this book serves *taqiyya* in the present as it did in the Middle Ages is striking.

While the ʿAlawī literature in Syria is apologetic,[48] that in Lebanon is also characterized by an active attack against the Sunnī *takfīr*[49] and against Western research of the sect.[50] The ʿAlawī community of Tripoli does not seem to join the Syrian movement of total denial of the old identity. In 1973 the members of the sect protested against the subordination of the ʿAlawīs under the Supreme Shīʿī Assembly and against what seemed to be their imposed assimilation with the other Shīʿīs of Lebanon.[51] The ʿAlawī literature in Lebanon is characterized by a tendency to present the sect as a Ṣūfī branch of Shīʿism rather than to deny their previous identity as Nuṣayrīs.[52]

Since the political interests of the ʿAlawīs of Syria and Lebanon are different, the development of two different genres of apologetic literature in the future is to be expected. The change of identity of the sect may indicate a real Imāmization of the ʿAlawīs but it could also reflect a modern *taqiyya*, which serves to receive the support of Shīʿī state, as it did in the period of the founders of the sect.

The *fatwā* of Ibn Taymiyya is still influential nowadays, as reflected in neo-Ḥanbalī writings published in Saudi Arabia as well as in the writing of the Muslim Brothers who are inspired by Ibn Taymiyya's fundamentalism.[53] The attacks of the Muslim Brothers against the ʿAlawīs

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[48] Concerning this literature, see S. Mervin, *Un réformiste chiite: Ulema et lettres du Gabal Âmil (actuel Liban-Sud) de la fin de l'Empire ottoman à l'indépendence du Liban* (Paris: Karthala, 2000), pp. 323–326.

[49] See the interesting criticism of Ibn Taymiyya in Aḥmad ʿAlī Ḥasan and Ḥāmid Ḥasan, *al-Muslimūna 'l-ʿAlawiyyūna fī Lubnān* (Tripoli: Muʾassasat Adīb lil-Ṭibāʿa, 1989), pp. 155–156.

[50] See, for example, Hāshim ʿUthmān, *al-ʿAlawiyyūna bayna 'l-ḥaqīqa wa-'l-usṭūra* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlā, 1985); *Hal al-ʿAlawiyyūna Shīʿa?* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li'l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1994).

[51] M. Kramer, "Syria's ʿAlawīs and Shīʿism", in M. Kramer (ed.), *Shiʾism, Resistance and Revolution* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987), pp. 247–248; *al-Nahār* (newspaper, Lebanon), 5 July 1973, p. 12 and 6 July 1973, p. 3.

[52] Aḥmad ʿAlī Ḥasan and Ḥāmid Ḥasan, *al-Muslimūna 'l-ʿAlawiyyūna fī Lubnān*, pp. 14, 19.

[53] See, for example, U. F. Abd-Allah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1983), pp. 42–48, 111–114, 189. Most of the anti-ʿAlawī material of the Muslim

intensified after the latter seized power in Syria and even more after the brutal oppression of the rebellion of Ḥamāt. However, this negative view of the ʿAlawīs as heretics and illegitimate rulers in Syria does not seem to be shared by all Sunnī Muslims. In modern history, the Sunnīs have tried to acknowledge the Muslim identity of the ʿAlawīs in order to encourage them to join the Arab national movement on two occasions. The first time was in 1936, when Syrian nationalists urged the Muftī Ḥājj Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, following a public declaration of belief by ʿAlawī shaykhs in Syria, to issue a *fatwā* confirming that the ʿAlawīs are Muslims.[54] The second effort to assimilate the ʿAlawīs was during the years of the creation of the United Arab Republic uniting Egypt and Syria (1958–1961). It is in this period that the the Shaykh al-Azhar issued his famous *fatwā* acknowledging Shīʿism as the fifth school of Islam. In this atmosphere of *taqrīb* (advancement of the relationship between Muslim groups) Musṭafā Shakʿa wrote his book *Islam bilā madhāhib* (Islam without schools) in which he calls upon all Muslims, Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, including the ʿAlawīs, to overlook the differences between them and unite in order reinforce Islam and fight *takfīr* (accusation of heresy) and *fitna* (war between Muslims).[55]

As for the Shīʿī attitude, there is no doubt that from the twentieth century the orthodox Shīʿī authorities in Lebanon, Iraq and Iran made a consistent and successful effort to assimilate the ʿAlawīs in Shīʿism.[56] Nevertheless, this "return home" of the ʿAlawīs to their Jaʿfarī source

Brothers after the massacre of Ḥamāt was published in *al-Nadhīr* (printed in Germany after 1982), but attacks against the ʿAlawīs and their religion also appeared earlier, when their organ was published in Syria; see, for example, *al-Nadhīr* (18), 31 March 1980, pp. 4–5; (22), 31 August 1980, p. 7; (24), 22 October 1980, pp. 35–38; (27), 1 November 1981, p. 33.

[54] P. Boneschi, "Une fatwa du grand muftī de Jérusalem Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḥusaynī sur les ʿAlawites", *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 122 (1960), pp. 42–54, 134–152; see also the publication of this *fatwā* in *al-Shaʿab* (newspaper, Syria), 31 July 1936.

[55] Musṭafā Shakʿa, *Islam bilā madhāhib* (Cairo: Dār al-Qalam, 1961), pp. 3–4, 7–9, 17, 224–238, 303–304.

[56] Kramer, "Syria's ʿAlawīs and Shīʿism", pp. 237–248. Concerning the study of ʿAlawīs in Shīʿī institutions in Iran and Iraq, see, for example, ʿAbdul ʿAzīz Ibrāhīm, *al-ʿAlawiyyūn fidāʾiyyū ʾl-Shīʿa al-majhūlūna* (Najaf: Kuliyyat al-Fiqh, 1972), pp. 38–42. For an interesting defence of an Imāmī writer against a Wahhābī accusation of heresy of the ʿAlawīs, see Muḥammad Shawqī ʾl-Ḥaddād, *al-Mawsūʿa al-Wahhābiyya wa-ʾl-Shīʿa al-Imāmiyya* (Beirut: al-Ghadīr, 1998), pp. 245–246; it answers the accusation in Māniʿ ibn Ḥammād al-Jahhānī, *al-Mawsūʿa al-muyassara fī ʾl-adyān wa-ʾl-madhāhib wa-ʾl-aḥzāb al-muʿāṣira* (Riyad: Dār al-Nadwa al-ʿÂlamiyya liʾl-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1997), pp. 394–397.

is always conditioned by the disconnection from their Nuṣayrī identity and from *ghulūw*. More and more ʿAlawī shaykhs receive their qualification in Imāmī institutes and are not initiated by mystic shaykhs as before. The question of whether the new trend is taking the place of the old initiation, and how the ʿAlawī religious identity will change as a result in the future, demands further study.[57]

[57] For an interesting article concerning the change of the ʿAlawī identity in the twentieth century, see K. Firro, "The ʿAlawīs in modern Syria: From Nuṣayriya to Islam via ʿAlawīya", *Der Islam* 82/1 (2005), pp. 1–31. Firro demonstrates the sect's effort to adjust itself to orthodox Shīʿism and deny external influences on the theology of the sect.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

PRIMARY NUṢAYRĪ SOURCES

a. *Pre-Nuṣayrī sources transmitted from the Ghulāt*

Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī

1. *Umm al-kitāb (UK)*
This book is attributed to Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī (eighth century) who is said to have received mystical guidance from the Shīʿī leader of his time, the fifth Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 117/735). Although this source is neither cited nor appears in any Nuṣayrī source, and was found among the Ismāʿīlīs, it seems rather like a proto-Nuṣayrī document.[1] For this reason it is included here because it contains terminology, doctrines and traditions that were adopted by the Nuṣayrīs. The term *Umm al-kitāb* appears only three times in the Nuṣayrī literature, once as a nickname of Fāṭima and twice as a synonym to the Qurʾān. The first source is an early Nuṣayrī text from the tenth century, explaining that it is the mystical name of Fāṭima (in masculine form, Fāṭir), daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad and wife of the first Imām ʿAlī. In Nuṣayrī literature Fāṭir is seen as the "Mother of the Book" and the mystical meaning of the Book is her sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (second and third Imāms), keepers of the esoteric knowledge.[2] The second source is in the *Dīwān of al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī*, which explains that the *Umm al-kitāb* guides the believer through the seven obstacles (*ʿaqabāt*) of the material world in the path to heaven.[3] The third source is an undated manuscript from the Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1540 collection

[1] See Halm's explanation concerning a possible transmission of this book from the Nuṣayrīs to the Ismāʿīlīs in Syria in *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, p. 90.

[2] al-Jillī, *Kitāb bātin al-ṣalāt* (*KBS*), p. 241. The usual Muslim use of the term *Umm al-kitāb* is for the first chapter of the Qurʾān, the Fātiḥa; see V. Ivanov, "Notes sur l'*Umm al-Kitab* des Ismaéliens de l'Asie centrale", *REI* 4 (1932), p. 421. Ivanov prefers to translate the term as *essence des livres*.

[3] *DMS*, p. 220.

(fol. 159b) in which the initiate is instructed by his instructor to follow the *Umm al-kitāb*.

The author of the *Umm al-kitāb*, Jābir, is considered a Nuṣayrī saint[4] and it is cited as transmitting mystical traditions in the Nuṣayrī sources.[5] The *Umm al-kitāb*, a rare manuscript in the Persian language, was studied by Ivanov in the 1930s,[6] by Halm who also translated it into German and Arabic (which seems to be its original form), and by Filippani-Ronconi who translated it into Italian.[7] Halm considered it to be a text of the *mukhammisa*, a sect led by Jābir.[8] Its content is designated for the intimate circle of the Imām only, called *muwaḥḥidūn* (monotheists), a term used later by the Nuṣayrīs for self-definition. It contains much of the terminology and Gnosticism adopted subsequently by the Nuṣayrīs; for example the manifestation of the deity in ʿAlī, its concealment by the veil (*ḥijāb*), the myth of the *habṭa*, the fall from the ideal world, the mystical path of the believer (*ṣirāṭ*), the transmigration of souls, and the ideal existence of the shades (*aẓilla*) before the creation of the earthly world and the apocalyptic return of the last Imām. The text presents a clear Persian dualism of good and evil as well as an ideal existence in opposition to a material world. The author uses characters from the Zoroastrian religion. Halm explains that the book contains three layers that were connected by a later compiler: the first part is an explanation by the Imām al-Bāqir (still a child) to ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ about the meaning of the letters; the second and main part is an explanation by al-Bāqir to Jābir about the creation of the cosmos; and the third is later additions by the members of the sect of Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb. According to Halm, this document reflects ancient mythology in Shīʿī garb.[9]

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[4] Jābir is considered a *yatīm* in the Nuṣayrī Catechism; see M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 181.

[5] See, for example, Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, ed. R. Strothmann, *Der Islam* 27 (1944–1946), pp. 90–93. About Jābir, see Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ, 1984), pp. 34–35.

[6] V. Ivanov, "Notes sur *l'Umm al-kitab* des Ismaéliens de l'Asie centrale", *REI* 4 (1932), pp. 419–481; "Ummu'l-Kitāb", *Der Islam* 23 (1936), pp. 1–32. See also the recent translation of the Persian text to Arabic in Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 90–135.

[7] Translated in Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 90–135 and *Islamische Gnosis*, pp. 125–186. The book was also translated into Italian: P. Filippani-Ronconi, *Ummu ʾl-Kitab: introduzione, traduzione e note* (Napoli: [n.p.], 1966).

[8] H. Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten: Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der Ġulāt und die Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums," *Der Islam* 58 (1981), pp. 73, 74–76.

[9] Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 81–138.

Al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar al-Juʿfī

2. *Kitāb al-haft wa-ʾl-aẓilla (HA)*

In contrast with the previous source, this book is cited in Nuṣayrī medieval literature. It lacks the Iranian influence typical of *Umm al-kitāb*. The *Haft* is attributed to al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar al-Juʿfī, another Nuṣayrī saint, and an important transmitter of Ghulāt traditions from the ninth century.[10] Al-Mufaḍḍal lived a generation after Jābir and is said to have received mystical guidance from the sixth Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765). There are citations from the *Haft* in almost every Nuṣayrī source since the emergence of the sect, beginning with the writings of the eponymous Ibn Nuṣayr.[11] This indicates that it is one of the first books embraced as a canonical[12] source by the Nuṣayrī sect.

The *Haft* contains gnostic elements similar to those in the *Umm al-kitāb*, which were developed later in the Nuṣayrī religion. The main issues are: the creation of the cosmic order; the myth of the *aẓilla* and the first seven created persons (*al-sabʿa al-ādamiyyūn*); the creation of heavenly creatures (the hierarchic *ahl al-marātib*) and the corresponding evil beings; the *habṭa* resulting in the transmigration of souls (*tanāsukh*); and the manifestation of the deity in the Imāms. The *Haft* also treats other subjects that do not appear in *Umm al-kitāb*, such as the mystical meaning of the pillars of Islam, the Docetism of Jesus and al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, and the importance of the concealment (*kitmān*) of the secret knowledge. Another characteristic of the *Haft* is the repeated criticism of the non-mystical Shīʿīs of Kufa, called by the Imām Jaʿfar simply *ahl al-Kūfa*.[13] These people are accused of being deficient Shīʿīs (*al-Shīʿa al-muqaṣṣira*).[14] In one place the Imām agrees with an explanation of Jābir concerning the cyclical manifestation of the deity, and this could be a reference to Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī.[15] Two

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[10] On al-Mufaḍḍal, who is considered a *bāb* by the Nuṣayrīs, see Halm, *Der Islam* 55 (1978), pp. 219–266; *Der Islam* 58 (1981), pp. 15–86.

[11] The oldest citation of the *Haft* in Nuṣayrī sources is found in Ibn Nuṣayr, *Kitāb al-mithāl wa-ʾl-ṣūra* (*MS*), p. 210.

[12] The Christian terms canon and canonization are used for the adoption of Ghulāt books by the Nuṣayrīs and their addition to their sacred literature. Being canonized, these books serve as references in explanations of Nuṣayrī doctrines as well as material for study and prayer.

[13] *HA*, pp. 40, 46, 55, 80.

[14] Ibid., pp. 34–35, 45.

[15] Ibid., p. 81.

versions of this source were obtained. The printed edition of the *Haft* by Aref Tamer[16] is used here, rather than the less exact version of *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* VI, pp. 290–423.

3. *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ (KS)*

This source is also attributed to al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar al-Juʿfī. It appears in manuscript form in Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1449 fol. 80a–182a, as well as in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* VI (pp. 95–162). This manuscript was studied by Bar-Asher and Kofsky.[17] It is difficult to be precise about the period of its compilation. It seems that the *Ṣirāṭ* was a Ghulāt book canonized by al-Khaṣībī in the tenth century.[18] According to the *Ṣirāṭ*, it was transmitted by Abū ʾl-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Hadrī (from al-Hadr in north Iraq). This last shaykh was a disciple of al-Khaṣībī's successor in Syria, Muḥammad al-Jillī (tenth century) and could have been a contemporary of al-Ṭabarānī (eleventh century).

The *isnād* of *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ* begins with al-Hadrī< al-Jillī<al-Khaṣībī and goes through well-known Ghulāt as far back as al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar who interrogates the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. But this *isnād* is most likely a late fabrication, because most of the early Nuṣayrī sources admit that it is Isḥāq al-Aḥmar who transmitted the *Ṣirāṭ*.[19] This is also the opinion of the tenth-century Shīʿī historian al-Masʿūdī.[20] Halm sees the theology of the book as being too developed to be attributed to al-Mufaḍḍal.[21] Nevertheless, Halm's hypothesis should be reviewed in the light of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* sources. As will be seen, newly available sources show clearly that Ghulāt doctrines were already considerably developed prior to the creation of the Nuṣayrī sect. Leonardo Capezzone, who published a critical edition of the *Ṣirāt* with valuable

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[16] Al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar al-Juʿfī [attributed], *Kitāb al-haft wa-ʾl-aẓilla*, ed. A. Tamir (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāthulīkiyya, 1969).

[17] Bar-Asher and Kofsky, "L'ascension céleste du gnostique nusayrite", pp. 144–145.

[18] Al-Jillī is the first leader of the sect to cite from *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ*, but he probably would not have had it canonized without the permission of his master al-Khaṣībī. See al-Jillī, *Kitāb ḥāwī al-asrār* (*HA*), pp. 163, 197.

[19] See *KHA*, p. 163; *HAD*, pp. 23, 40, 42, 53, 133, 138, 141, 168, 170, 172; *HAIH*, p. 257.

[20] ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn *al-Masʿūdī, murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawāhir* (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Jāmiʿa al-Lubnāniyya, 1966), vol. 2, p. 258.

[21] H. Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten: Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der Ġulāt und die Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums," *Der Islam* 58 (1981), p. 73.

notes,[22] is unable to give a clear date for this document or to decide who its real author is.

The main subject of the book, as indicated by its title, is the *Ṣirāṭ*, a Qurʾānic term interpreted by the Nuṣayrīs as the spiritual path of the believers to God. The manuscript version of this book is used here. The copyist is Shaykh Yūsuf ibn Shaykh ʿArīb of the village of Ra's Baʿliyya (region of Ṣāfītā in the governorate of Ṭarṭūs) in 1206/1791.[23]

4. *Kitāb al-usūs (KU)*

This manuscript, like the *Ṣirāṭ*, is part of the Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1449 (fol. 1a–79b). It was copied by the same copyist in the same year and place as the *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ*.[24] The date of its compilation is unknown. Dussaud as well as Massignon attributed it to al-Mufaḍḍal.[25] The *Usūs* is mentioned in the sect's sources from the second half of the ninth century onwards. This may indicate that this anonymous Ghulāt text was added to the sect's canon, as in the case of the *Ṣirāṭ*, during the period of al-Khaṣībī.[26] *Kitāb al-usūs* has two other titles: *Kitāb taʾlīf abniyat al-kalām* and *Kitāb maʿrifat ḥikmat Sulaymān ibn Dāwūd*, but despite its attribution to King Solomon, it has nothing to do with Judaism. On the contrary, this text contains some Christian motifs. The *Usūs* is presented as a transmission of Solomon's wisdom to the eighth Imām of the Shīʿa, ʿAlī al-Riḍā. According to the text, this Imām kept the text secret and refused to deliver it to the Caliph al-Maʾmūn (d. 218/833). The manuscript of the *Usūs* was studied by Bar-Asher and Kofsky.[27] It was printed in a corrupted version by Jaʿfar

[22] See L. Capezzone, "Il *Kitāb al-Ṣirāṭ* attribuito a Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar al-Guʿfi. Edizione del ms. unico (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale) e studio introduttivo", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 69 (1995), pp. 295–416.

[23] *KS*, fol. 181b–182a.

[24] *US*, fol. 79a,b.

[25] L. Massignon, "Esquisse", p. 642, item 1.

[26] Al-Jillī is the first to cite from *Kitāb al-usūs*; see *Kitāb ḥāwī al-asrār* (*HA*), pp. 158–163 (compare with the almost identical text in *KU*, fol. 8a, 8b–9a, 11b, 12a, 15a, 22b, 24a, 34b, 35a, 35b), then pp. 172, 158–161, 214; see other citations from the *Usūs* in al-Jillī, *Risālat al-fatq wa-ʾl-ratq* (*FR*), p. 318 and *Risālat al-andiya* (*RA*). p. 328 (compare the two last citations with *KU*, fol. 8b). Next to cite the *Kitāb al-usūs* is al-Jillī's disciple, al-Ṭabarānī, in *al-Baḥth wa-ʾl-dalāla* (*BD*), p. 38. The last citation of the *Usūs* is found in al-Nashshābī, *Munāẓara* (*MN*), fol. Fol 104a.

[27] M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, "The theology of *Kitāb al-Usūs*: An early pseude-pigraphic Nuṣayrī work", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 71 (1998), pp. 55–81.

al-Kinj al-Dandashī,[28] and includes unorganized Nuṣayrī theological issues such as the nature of the divinity and its appearances, the *habṭa*, the saving gnosis and transmigration.

5. *Al-Risāla al-Mufaḍḍaliyya (RMUF)*
This short epistle, in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* VI (pp. 9–18), was transmitted by members of the Nuṣayrī sect, Abū Muḥammad Naṣr ibn Muḥammad > al-Jillī > al-Khaṣībī > through Ghulāt mystics going back to al-Mufaḍḍal who, in turn, interrogates Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. This *isnād*, like that of the *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ* beginning with one of al-Jillī's disciples, may indicate that the Mufaḍḍaliyya was canonized by al-Khaṣībī. The main issues are the relations between the *maʿnā* and the *ism* based on a mystical interpretation of the *Āyat al-nūr* (verse of light) in the Qurʾān, and the number of the *ahl al-marātib*.

Muḥammad ibn Sinān al-Zāhirī

6–7. *Kitāb al-ḥujub wa-'l-anwār (HUA*, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* VI, pp. 19–64) and *Kitāb al-anwār wa-'l-ḥujub (AUH*, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* VI, pp. 65–94) are both attributed to Muḥammad ibn Sinān al-Ḥakīm ("the sage"), disciple of al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar who claimed he was guided by the Imām of his time, ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818). Like al-Mufaḍḍal, he is also considered a Nuṣayrī saint.[29] They deal with the appearance of the *ḥujub*, the veils that were created as a result of the sins of the heavenly creatures. There are some major differences between these two collections of mystical traditions. The *Ḥujub wa-'l-anwār* contains two layers. The older one seems to be an original text by Muḥammad ibn Sinān, who transmits a tradition that al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar received from the well-known *ghālī* Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb Muḥammad ibn Abī Zaynab al-Kāhilī, as well as from the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. A later layer is the addition of an anonymous Nuṣayrī writer (perhaps al-Jannān al-Junbulānī) who adds to the traditions some explanations of

[28] J. K. al-Dandashī, *Madkhal ilā 'l-madhhab al-ʿAlawī al-Nuṣayrī* (Irbid: al-Rūznā, 2000), pp. 73–164.
[29] On Muḥammad ibn Sinān, who is considered a *naqīb* in the Nuṣayrī doctrine, see H. Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten: Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der Ġulāt und die Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums," *Der Islam* 55 (1978), p. 238; Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, p. 22 note 84, p. 144.

the *yatīm al-akbar* (a title attributed to al-Jannān's master Muḥammad ibn Jundab) and of the *bāb* (the eponymous Ibn Nuṣayr).[30]

The book has neither order nor a clear focus. Apart from the issue of the *Ḥujub*, It deals with a variety of subjects, such as the cycles of history, the mystical meaning of the prayers and of the *ḥajj*, as well as traditions by Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī.

The *Anwār wa-'l-ḥujub* is easier to deal with. In its introduction, Muḥammad ibn Sinān writes explicitly that his book is a collection of traditions that he assembled in order to better grasp the wisdom of the Lord. Unlike the previous book, this one focuses on one subject: the creation of the cosmos, beginning with the *anwār wa-'l-ḥujub* (lights and veils). The tradition of the creation is similar to that which appears in *Umm al-kitāb* and *al-Haft wa-'l-aẓilla*. Nevertheless, a careful reading reveals a second layer of the text, as in the case of the *Ḥujub wa-'l-anwār*. The text seems to have been amended by a Twelver Shīʿī, probably a Nuṣayrī shaykh, who tried throughout the text to emphasize the mystical meaning of the number 12 and to diminish the importance of number 7. This attempt cannot reflect the debate of the time of Ibn Sinān (eighth century), but a later (ninth century onwards) Imāmī polemic against the Ismāʿīlī Shīʿī group. This hypothesis becomes more confirmed when the author mentions the eleventh Imām al-ʿAskarī, who lived a century after the author's time. Moreover, the author refers to the "error" of the *wāqifiyya aṣḥāb Ismāʿīl* (those who stop [the lineage of the Imāms at the seventh Imam] supporters of the seventh Imām Ismāʿīl).[31]

b. *Nuṣayrī sources*

Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr

8. *Kitāb al-akwār wa-'l-adwār al-nūrāniyya (AAN)*

This source was not available until lately, when it was published in Lebanon in the new *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* (pp. 33–205).[32] The five pages at the beginning showing the original manuscript seem to be

[30] *HUA*, p. 30. The author also mentions Ibn Nuṣayr's book *al-Akwār wa-'l-adwār* (see below, item 8).

[31] *AHU*, pp. 81–82. Concerning the Ismāʿīlīs, see F. Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

[32] Abū Mūsā and Shaykh Mūsā, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī (1) Rasā'il al-ḥikma*

modern. They do not call to mind any other Nuṣayrī manuscript; for example, they include punctuation and the pages lack the word at the bottom of each folio for the first word on the next folio. Nevertheless, its style and content seem to fit the time of the author, though the credibility of the text can be determined only by comparing it with citations in other sources. The only paragraph available in another source is from the eleventh-century *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* (see below, item 32), which is almost identical (i.e. with minor spelling differences) to the paragraph in the present version of the *Akwār*.[33] The book consists of two parts: the first is an account of a mystical revelation of the third Imām ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn to his intimate believers. Although the *Akwār* is attributed to the eponym of the Nuṣayrī sect, Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr, it is not clear if he is the author of its first part or merely its transmitter.[34] The second part, in which Ibn Nuṣayr nominates his disciple Ibn Jundab as his successor, contains many elements from the *Umm al-kitāb* and the *Haft*. It treats a variety of subjects, mainly the transcendence of God, the account of the *ahl al-marātib*, the cycles of history (*akwār, adwār*), the mystical meaning of the Persian equinox celebrations of Nawrūz and Mihrijān, and the relationship between the two elevated aspects of the divinity, the *maʿnā* and the *ism*.

9. *Kitāb al-mithāl wa-ʾl-ṣūra (MS)*
This book, which is also included in the modern *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* I (pp. 207–234), contains an almost identical paragraph to one that is cited in *Kitāb al-uṣayfir* (see below, item 50).[35] As in the case of the previous compilation, it is attributed to Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr. Its content is similar to that of the *Haft*, dealing with the pre-existent "shades", the *al-sabʿa al-Ādamiyyūn*, the *ahl al-marātib* and their opposites, the devils. It also contains strong condemnations of the Shīʿī *muqaṣṣira* and an account of the *akwār*.

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al-ʿAlawiyya: 1. Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Namīrī 2. al-Sayyid al-Jannān al-Junbulānī (Lebanon: Dār li-ajli ʾl-Maʿrifa/ Diyār ʿAql, 2006).

[33] Compare *MA*, pp. 180–186 with *AAN*, pp. 98–103.

[34] The beginning of the *isnād* presents a bizarre chain of transmission going back from Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī through numbers of Ghulāt to Ibn Nuṣayr's rival, Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad (al-Aḥmar) who transmits it to Muḥammad ibn Jundab. Oddly enough, this last mystic returns to his teacher Ibn Nuṣayr in order to ask him for an explanation of the book. Later in the book Ibn Nuṣayr explains to Ibn Jundab that Isḥāq transmitted it without the Imām's permission. See *AAN*, pp. 33–34, 58.

[35] Compare *MS*, pp. 222–224 with *Uṣayfir* (*US*), fol. 3a, b. The material in *Uṣayfir* is abbreviated and some paragraphs from the *Mithāl* are omitted.

Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Nakhaʿī

10. *Ādāb ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (AAM)*

This book is attributed to Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar by the editors of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* VI (pp. 261–287). Nevertheless, the book is not mentioned in any other Nuṣayrī source. A careful reading of this text reveals the real author's identity. The introduction consists of a typical Nuṣayrī *isnād*: al-Ṭabarānī < al-Jillī < al-Khaṣībī followed by three lines from one poem that could not be located in the *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* (see below, item 13). The next paragraph is of rare historical importance: Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Nakhaʿī "al-Aḥmar" in the presence of his *majlis*, reads his testament, which includes a demand to follow the doctrines of his sect, the Isḥāqiyya (not mentioned by name). These are mainly the mystery of the divinity, the allegorical explanations of Islamic obligations, special prayers recommended by Isḥāq on different occasions, and the obligation of the concealment (*kitmān*) of esoteric knowledge. In one source of the sect the book appears as *Kitāb ādāb al-dīn* and is attributed to Abū 'l-Muṭṭalib Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mufaḍḍal.[36]

This book, in fact, is the only complete document written by Isḥāq that has survived to this day. The reason for its inclusion in the Nuṣayrī canon is probably that before splitting from the sect, Isḥāq was one of Ibn Nuṣayr's most prominent disciples. Isḥāq's writings are cited in other Nuṣayrī sources, mainly those of the Banū Shuʿba.[37] The canonization of the *Ādāb ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib*, as well as citations of Isḥāq in Nuṣayrī sources, may indicate that the beginning of the rivalry between the Nuṣayriyya and the Isḥāqiyya was about leadership rather than doctrinal issues.[38]

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[36] *HAD*, p. 37. The fragment is identical to the source.

[37] Isḥāq's lost writings are mentioned in several Nuṣayrī sources. He is the real transmitter of the *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ* (see above, item 3); and the author of the following sources:

Kitāb al-tanbīh (in *MS*, p. 210; *HAD*, p. 45)–the citations deal with the titles of God and the beginning of his creation; *Kitāb al-shawāhid* (in *HAD*, p. 34)—the citations deal with God's appearances in history; and *Kitāb al-taklīf*, also called *Bāṭin al-taklīf* (in *HAD*, p. 36, 49, 108, 112, 174)—the citations deal with the beginning of Gods creation, using his *mashīʾa* (divine will).

[38] This hypothesis concerns only the period of the founders of the Nuṣayrī sect (ninth–eleventh centuries). The account of the theological differences between Nuṣayriyya and Isḥāqiyya seem to reflect a later period, that of the the heresiographer al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153). See Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-'l-niḥal* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992), pp. 192–193. The popular

ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān al-Junbulānī

11. *Kitāb īḍāḥ al-miṣbāḥ (IM)*
Its complete name is *Kitāb īḍāḥ al-miṣbāḥ al-dāll ʿalā sabīl al-najāḥ*. This book is the last and most problematic in the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* I (pp. 236–299). Although it is referred to by its title in the lists of Nuṣayrī sources of Josef Catafago (1876) and of Louis Massignon (1938), there is no trace of this source either in the available texts of the sect or in Imāmī literature.[39] Its content is no less problematic. The author is ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān al-Junbulānī, called "the Persian" in the sect's sources and the teacher of its main founder, al-Khaṣībī. Nevertheless, there is no trace of Persian influence in this book. Its mystical content does not always fit in with the writings of al-Junbulānī's followers, mainly his allegorical explanations of the Muslim holidays, which do not recall those of al-Ṭabarānī's *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* (see below, item 32). Other parts of the book, which are not typical of Nuṣayrī documents, clearly show an effort to conform to Imāmī Shīʿism, mainly in its orthodox explanations of the pillars of Islam lacking any mystical interpretation.[40] Considering the irregularities in this book, it is impossible to evaluate its credibility.

Al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī

12. *Kitāb al-hidāya al-kubrā (HK)*
This document is a rare source for studying the activity of its author, al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī, the main founder of the Nuṣayrī sect. It was published in the 1980s by the Muʾassasat al-Balāgh in Beirut.[41] It is probably the only work of al-Khaṣībī that has been pre-

tradition of the burning of the Isḥāqiyya's book is also associated with a later period, that of the *amīr* Makzūn al-Sinjārī (thirteenth century). See Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib al-Ṭawīl, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (Lādhiqiyya: Dār al-Andalus, 1966), p. 362.

39 It should be noted that the titles of two of the three books available in the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*, I, appear in J. Catafago, "Nouvelles mélanges", *Journal Asiatique* 4 (1876), pp. 523–525 items 10 (*al-Akwār wa-'l-adwār al-nūrāniyya*) and 18 (*al-Īḍāḥ*); Catafago served in the 1840s as chancellor and dragoman of the Prussian consulate in Syria. Some of the items mentioned in his list cannot be located today.

See all three books in L. Massignon, "Esquisse d'une bibliographie nusayrie", *Opera Minora* I (1936), p. 642, items 11, 14 and 16 with the same titles. Unfortunately, these items are categorized as SA = Catalogue d'une bibliothèque, without specification.

40 *IM*, pp. 257–272.

41 Al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī, *Kitāb al-hidāya al-kubrā* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Balāgh, 1986). Also printed recently in Lebanon by the same anonymous publishers of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*, Diyār ʿAql: Dār min ajl al-Maʿrifa, 2007.

served in its totality. The available book contains around 400 pages of traditions concerning the Prophet Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭima, and the twelve Imāms. According to its anonymous editor, it was printed using one main manuscript completed by other editors, but no details are given.[42] Because of its purpose, it is written in accordance with the *taqiyya* code in a quasi-orthodox style, avoiding non-Imāmī mysticism. Al-Khaṣībī attacks the Ghulāt in one place, labeling them heretics.[43] Contrary to Shīʿī orthodox opinion, the author refers to the sect's eponym Ibn Nuṣayr as the *bāb* of the eleventh Imām, Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī.[44] Moreover, towards the end of his book, al-Khaṣībī briefly mentions other ideas that are considered heretical in Imāmī Shīʿism, such as the tradition of the *aẓilla* and the transmission of divine powers to the Imāms (*tafwīḍ*).[45] The credibility of this book is high, considering the fact that three almost identical paragraphs of it are cited in other sources, one in the Imāmī *Biḥār al-anwār*,[46] and two more in other Nuṣayrī sources.[47] The book is of special historical importance, since it contains some rare autobiographical details.

13. *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī (DKH)*

The poetic corpus of al-Khaṣībī has a double importance, for the research of his sect's doctrines and for the study of the Nuṣayrī poetic literature. Here the Manchester manuscript[48] is used as the other main version in Damascus is inaccessible.[49] The Damascus version

[42] Ibid., p. 444.
[43] Ibid., pp. 431–432.
[44] Ibid., p. 323.
[45] Ibid., pp. 437, 444.
[46] Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Wafāʾ, 1983), vol. 78 pp. 395–397, compare with *HK*, pp. 344–34.
[47] Compare al-Ṭabarānī, *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* (*MA*, see below item 32), p. 97–100 with *HK*, pp. 82–85. Compare also *Munāẓarat al-Shaykh al-Nashshābī* (*MN*, see below item 52), fol. 105b with *HK*, p. 126.
[48] *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī*, Ms. Manchester (John Rylands Library), Ms. Arab 452a; catalogued in A. Mingana, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1934), pp. 745–747. Concerning the Damascus version, see Damascus, Ẓāhiriyya, Ms. Arab 247, fol. 1–82a; catalogued in ʿIzzat Ḥasan, *Fihris makhṭūṭāt Dār al-Kutub al-Ẓāhiriyya: al-Shiʿr* (Damascus: Maṭbūʿāt al-Jāmiʿ al-ʿIlmī al-ʿArabī bi-Dimashq, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 140–141, 193, 266–267.
[49] However, a printed version of the *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* was obtained, which combines the version used here with that of Damascus; see S. Ḥabib, *Dīwān al-Khuṣaybī* [sic] *maʿa sharḥ lʾil-rumūz al-bāṭiniyya al-wārida fīhi: dirāsa wa taḥqīq wa-sharḥ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī liʾl-Maṭbūʿāt, 2001). Unfortunately, this book lacks references to the author's important explanations. A commentary to the *Dīwān* was printed

was copied in 1242/1826 [50] and the Manchester version was kept until 1239/1823 in the Khāsikī family in the region of Lādhiqiyya belonging to the *Khayyāṭīn* faction.[51] However, the Manchester version was copied from an older version of a certain Shaykh Sazir (or Shazr/Shizr since there are no diacritical marks) ibn al-Shaykh Ḥasan ibn al-Shaykh Muḥammad ("ibn" could mean "disciple of") in 1123/1711.[52] A critical study of the two versions has yet to be undertaken.

The Manchester version of the *Dīwān* contains two major parts: one titled *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* (fol. 3b–84a, 57 poems), and *Dīwān al-gharīb* (fol. 84b–121b, 42 poems). The poems are arranged by length from long to short, with some exceptions. According to the anonymous introduction, the *Dīwān al-gharīb* was part of a certain *Dīwān al-Shāmī* (Syrian corpus), which was probably lost.[53] This manuscript is of tremendous importance for the study of the Nuṣayrīs. Not only does it contain all the doctrines of the sect, but it constitutes a cultural treasure as a typical pseudo-epigraphic compilation in which shaykhs from several periods added poems and attributed them to al-Khaṣībī. This explains the several styles and different levels of Arabic. In one place, the anonymous copyist noted that one poem was written by a ninth-century *ghālī*.[54] I would suggest that the *Dīwān* contains three levels of credibility: high credibility (poems cited in the texts of the founders of the sect, in the tenth and eleventh centuries and containing a high level of literary Arabic); medium credibility (poems cited in the twelfth-century *Munāẓarat al-Shaykh al-Nashshābī* (see below, item 52) containing different levels of Arabic); and low credibility (poems cited in the nineteenth-century *al-Bākūra al-Sulaymāniyya* (see below,

recently in Lebanon: Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Ibrāhim Murhaj, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Khuṣaybī* [sic] *Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusaybī* [sic] (Beirut: Dār al-Mīzān, 2005).

[50] S. Ḥabib, *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī*, p. 206.

[51] Ibid., fol. 1a–2b. The *Dīwān* passed among the shaykhs of the family, each one noting that he had read it, corrected it and added his blessings to another member of the family in its marginal opening papers. The latest correction was made by a member of this family in the village of Zghārū or Dhghārū (in the region of Lādhiqiyya) in 1239/1823. This last shaykh noted that his family was of Tunisian origin and belonged to the *Khayyāṭīn* faction. See ibid., fol 2b. Concerning the Nuṣayrī factions, see Chapter 1, note 221.

[52] *DKH*, fol. 214a.

[53] Ibid., fol. 121b.

[54] *DKH*, fol. A72–b74; the copyist attributes one poem to a certain Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿAbd al-Qaddūs, appearing in an *isnād* in Ibn Nuṣayr's *AAN*, p. 34.

item 58) or that do not appear in any source. Their language is Middle Arabic or even the local Syrian dialect).[55]

The Manchester manuscript also contains the *Dīwān* of a contemporary of al-Khaṣībī, al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī (fol.122b–214b, see item 53) and an *Urjūza* (poem in *rajaz* tempo) of a certain ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ibn Manṣūr al-Ṣuwayrī (fol. 217b–249b, see below, item 55), which was written in a later period. The *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* has not been studied before the present research, and was only referred to briefly in some of the studies of Massignon. Concerning the contents of the *Dīwān*, see below Appendix 6.

14–16. *al-Risāla al-rāstbāshiyya (RR)*

This precious document, unavailable until now, was printed in the second volume of *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*[56] (pp. 16–82). The name *Rāstbāshiyya* derives from the Persian words *rāst bāsh*, which means "be righteous!"[57] The historical context of this book is vague but there is some evidence that it was dedicated to the Buyid ruler ʿIzz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār. This hypothesis helps in explaining why the author, al-Khaṣībī, used a Persian title for his book written in Arabic. According to its opening, it was dedicated to his "children", i.e. his disciples. The book is more organized than most of the Nuṣayrī documents. It is arranged by subject and contains subtitles before every discussion.

This book has a supplement, called *Fiqh al-risāla al-rāstbāshiyya* (*FRR*, in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* (chap. 2, pp. 83–156), which includes explanations and additions to the first book. Although it is called *fiqh*, it has nothing to do with jurisprudence, and the title should be translated as "comprehending the epistle of *Rāstbāsh*". Al-Khaṣībī explains in the introduction that it was meant to answer the question of one of his disciples, but should serve as an explanation to the whole community. This may imply that it was dedicated to the Buyid ruler, but copies of the text were made for the *muwaḥḥidūn*. The two books, the *Risāla* and the *Fiqh*, deal with the following subjects: the nature of the divinity; the appearance of the *maʿnā*, the *ism* and

[55] See details in Appendix 6.

[56] Abū Mūsā and Shaykh Mūsā, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*, II, *Rasāʾil al-ḥikma al-ʿAlawiyya: 1. al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī 2. Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī* (Lebanon: Dār li-ajli ʾl-Maʿrifa/ Diyār ʿAql, 2006).

[57] This translation is also suggested by Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib al-Ṭawīl, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (Lādhiqiyya: Dār al-Andalus, 1966), p. 260; al-Ṭawīl translates it into Arabic as *kun mustaqīman*!

the *bāb* in the ideal world of light and in human form in the material world throughout history; the five levels of transmigration; and explanations of *gharāʾib* (sing. *gharīb*), i.e. difficult terms in the epistle. Throughout the two books, the chapters conclude with commentaries on the contents of al-Ṭabarānī's book *al-Baḥth wa-ʾl-dalāla* (*BD*, see below item 40) that are not found elsewhere. It should be added that the two books of the epistle of *Rāstbāsh* include long citations from a lost book of al-Khaṣībī, called *Risāla fī ʾl-siyāqa* (*RS*) dealing with the personifications of the three aspects of the divinity in history and their transition (*siyāqa*) from one historical figure to another. The reliability of the *Rāstbāshiyya* is very solid, because it served as raw material for al-Ṭabarānī one century later. Al-Ṭabarānī cited parts from it in his *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* (see below, item 32).[58]

Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī

17. *Kitāb ḥāwī ʾl-asrār* (*KHA*)
This book is part of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* II (pp. 157–217). It was written by al-Khaṣībī's most prominent disciple and successor, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī, whose study circle was in Aleppo. The book focuses on the nature of the divinity and its appearance in the worlds of light and material. It is of special bibliographical importance because of the nature of the text. Al-Jillī combines citations from Ghulāt literature that is lost today. In other cases, citations confirm the liability of available ancient sources and gives an idea of when they were canonized by the Nuṣayrīs.

18–22. Letters of al-Jillī to other shaykhs
Five of the available books and epistles by al-Jillī are letters he wrote to anonymous shaykhs. In this context, the title *Kitāb* could be translated both as "book" and "letter". There are some indications that some of these letters were destined for the Banū Shuʿba (or Shaʿba) family in Ḥarrān, but this is not certain.

58 See al-Ṭabarānī, *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* (*MA*), p. 13 (compare with *RR*, p. 77); p. 154 (*RR*, 81); p.12–15 (*RR*, 79–81); p. 108 (*FRR*, 53, 85); p. 109 (*FRR*, 86–87); pp. 188–189 (*RR*, 49–53).

18. *Kitāb bāṭin al-ṣalāt* (*KBS*)
In this source, given in the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* II (pp. 219–272), al-Jillī answers a letter he received from an anonymous shaykh of the *muwaḥḥidūn* who asked about the mystical (*bāṭin*) meaning of the Muslim prayers. In the introduction, al-Jillī praises his "brother" (colleague) for their knowledge of the truths (*maʿrifat al-ḥaqāʾiq*), perhaps referring to Shaykh Ḥamza Ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī's *Kitāb al-ḥaqāʾiq*.[59] Al-Jillī presents the Shīʿī version of every prayer and its esoteric explanation.

19. *Risālat al-bayān* (*RB*)
The full title of this epistle is *Risālat al-bayān li-ahl al-ʿaql wa-'l-adhhān* (*Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* II, pp. 273–285). It is al-Jillī's answer to a shaykh concerning the appearance of the *maʿnā*, the *ism* and the *bāb* and the rest of the *ahl al-marātib*. It is possible that this letter was also sent to Shaykh Ḥamza Ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī. The entire epistle appears in the Ms. Paris fonds arabe 1540 (fol. 53a–64a) following a chapter from *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif* (*HAIH*, see below, item 49), a book written by Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba (fol. 51b–53a). Contrary to the usual separation between the documents in the Ms. Paris (for example, "this is the end of the book/epistle", "Praise the Lord" or the list of copyists), between the chapter from *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif* and the *Risālat al-bayān* is the following: "Here ends the chapter, praise the Lord alone, and it is followed by the epistle of the *Bayān*…". The anonymous editor of these manuscripts clearly indicates that there is a connection between the two documents. Moreover, Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī was nicknamed "the greatest master" (*al-sayyid al-ajall*, fol. 51b) and al-Jillī sent his letter to "the great master" (*al-sayyid al-jalīl*, fol. 53b). Both documents deal with the divine nature of the Imāms Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. Most of the *Bayān* contains answers to the shaykh's questions concerning the *ahl al-marātib* and the rising of the gnostic to higher degrees of spirituality.

20–21. The following two epistles are of special importance, because they represent Nuṣayrī opinion concerning Christian doctrines. They

[59] See Catafago's list, item 9: *Kitāb al-ḥaqāʾiq*; in Massignon, "Esquisse", item 63: *Kitāb ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn*. This book is discussed in the context of the Druze debate with the Nuṣayrīs.

reflect a Nuṣayrī interpretation of Christian holidays and use of Christian terminology in an explicit way that had never been seen before in Ghulāt circles.

20. *al-Risāla al-Masīḥiyya* (*RM*)
This short epistle (in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* II, pp. 287–302), entitled "the epistle of the *masīḥ*/Jesus" (not to be translated as "the Christian Epistle"), explains in 18 chapters the mystical meaning of Christian symbols, saints and holidays. In fact, Christian doctrines are replaced by Nuṣayrī mystical interpretations, backed by Qurʾānic references. The most outstanding element in this document is the citation of Nestorius, Archbishop of Constantinople in the fifth century and the originator of the unorthodox Nestorian church. The significance of this citation is discussed in Chapter 2. At the beginning of the epistle al-Jillī writes that he has been asking about the truth of Jesus in the world of light and in material existence, but he does not refer to any specific person.

21. *al-Risāla al-Nuʿmāniyya (RN)*
This epistle (*Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* II, pp. 303–308) is a very short letter that al-Jillī sent to an anonymous shaykh, perhaps al-Nuʿmān, who is the Baghdadian theologian Shaykh al-Mufīd. He first sends regards to Shaykh Muḥammad and to his son, Shaykh Hibat Allāh. The purpose of the epistle is to present the Nuṣayrī divinity as pure monotheism and to prevent belief in a trinity. At the end, al-Jillī briefly mentions the Christian holidays that appeared in his *al-Risāla al-Masīḥiyya*, together with their mystical meaning.

22. *Risālat al-andiya* (*RA*)
The epistle (*Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* II, pp. 331–321) explains the phenomenon of *nidāʾ* (pl. *andiya*), the public declaration of the Imām's divinity. This document, which explains the logic of Ghulāt behavior and their self-exposure to severe danger, is discussed in Chapter 2. This seems to be one of the earliest letters of al-Jillī, because in its introduction he explains to an anonymous shaykh that he permits himself to send him the letter of his master (probably al-Khaṣībī), because he has died and is not able to send it himself.

23–25. The following three documents are epistles written by al-Jillī to his disciples. They do not appear as letters, but as short explanations of particular matters.

23. *Risālat al-fatq wa-'l-ratq* (*RFR, Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* II, pp. 309–319). This epistle presents Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq's explanation of the relations between the most abstract divinity, the *maʿnā* and its first emanation, the *ism*. The typical Neoplatonic terminology of this epistle can be found in other Nuṣayrī sources of this period.

24. *Risālat al-Ḥurūf* (*RH*, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* II, pp. 335–339). In this epistle al-Jillī explains the mystical meaning of the Arabic letters. This rare document helps decipher other Nuṣayrī texts, in which Arabic letters appear unexplained.

25. *Waṣiyyat al-Jillī li-Abī Saʿīd* (*WJAS*, in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* III, pp. 41–44). This document, entitled "the testimony of al-Jillī to Abū Saʿīd [al-Ṭabarānī]" is of theological as well as historical importance. It deals with the religious obligations that al-Ṭabarānī should observe in order to deserve to succeed his master.

Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī

26. *Dīwān al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī* (*DMA*)
This poetic corpus was written by Abū 'l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī, a member of the Nuṣayrīs who was a contemporary of al-Khaṣībī.[60] His *Dīwān* contains praise for al-Khaṣībī and his community, as well as rare allusions to his activity. Al-ʿĀnī's corpus follows the *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* in Ms. Manchester, Arab c–d 452, fol. 122b–214b.[61] It was copied by ʿAbdallāh, son of Shaykh Ḥasan in 1122/1710 (no location is specified). The *Dīwān al-Muntajab* was studied by Asʿad A. ʿAli, a Syrian scholar specializing in Arabic poetry, who based his study on several versions of this *Dīwān*.[62]

27–29. The following three sources are records of al-Khaṣībī's teachings compiled by his disciples in Iraq.

[60] There is good reason to believe that the dating of this text by Massignon in 595/1198, based on one modern source, is wrong; see Massignon, "Esquisse", p. 645. It is more likely that al-Muntajab was a contemporary of al-Khaṣībī.

[61] Catalogued in Mingana, *Catalogue*, pp. 747–749.

[62] A. A. ʿAli, *Fann al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī wa-ʿirfānuhu* (Beirut: Dār al-Nuʿmān, 1967). ʿAli's text is based on private versions as well as the version of Damascus, Ẓāhiriyya, Arab. 247, fol. 145–201; catalogued in ʿIzzat Ḥasan, *Fihris makhṭūṭāt Dār al-Kutub al-Ẓāhiriyya: al-Shiʿr*, vol. 2, pp. 226–227. Another printed version is available: Muḥammad ʿAlī Ḥallūm, *Dīwān al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī* (Lādhiqiyya: Dār ʿImād, 1995).

The three texts are parts of the Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1450 and are connected. They all treat the same subject of the nature of the Nuṣayrī divinity and the relations between its three main aspects, the *maʿnā*, the *ism* and the *bāb*.

Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Jisrī

27. *Rislat al-tawḥīd* (*RT*, fol. 42a–48a) is transmitted as follows:
This is an anonymous disciple's transmission (*naql*) of the epistle that was reported by (*rawā*) Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Jisrī after interrogating (he writes: *saʾaltu*) al-Khaṣībī. This last shaykh is answering the question of al-Jisrī whom he calls Abu ʾl-Ḥasan (this *kunya* repeated in *SJ* could refer to a disciple of al-Jisrī named Ḥasan):
x < al-Jisrī< al-Khaṣībī.

ʿAbdallāh ibn Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh

28. *Masāʾil ʿAbdallāh ibn Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh* (*MAHS*, fol. 48b–51b; also appears in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* IV, pp. 191–194 as *Masāʾil Ibn Hārūn ilā ʾl-Shaykh al-Khaṣībī*) is written (*tuktabu*) by an anonymous writer concerning Abū ʿAbdallāh ibn Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh's interrogations (*masāʾil*) of al-Khaṣībī in his place (no details) while he summoned his session (*majlis)*:
Anonymous writer < al-Ṣāʾigh< al-Khaṣībī.

The questions concern "the epistle which is read to those present",[63] which is probably the *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, because it deals with the same issues.

In the texts of *Risālat al-tawḥīd* and the *Masāʾil* the handwriting changes every couple of pages. They were copied by several shaykhs from the village of Qlayʿāt (south of Aleppo).[64]

29. The third source (*SJ*, Ṣāʾigh-Jisrī, fol. 176b–179a) is the untitled account of al-Ṣāʾigh concerning his visit to al-Jisrī (no details about the

[63] *MAHS*, fol. 48b–49a.

[64] The anonymous Nuṣayrī copyist of the *Masāʾil* used the text of a certain ʿImran Ḥamd, called "the philosopher of his time" and wrote: "we have found in it many deviations from the balance of the unification of God"; see *MAHS*, fol. 51b. This copyist appears in the colophon of *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ* as ʿImran ibn Ḥamd; see *KS*, fol. 182. The copyist's list (in brief, fol. 48b), is detailed later in the manuscript, including the place; see Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1450, fol. 64a.

place) during the month of Ramaḍān of the year 340/951, while al-Jisrī "was organizing the questions and compiling them, then copying from them the saying [of al-Khaṣībī to al-Ṣāʾigh] up to his words: one who worships the *ism* truly worships the *maʿnā*".[65] This rare colophon informs us that the earliest known version of this text is that of a certain Shaykh Salmān al-Lūdaqiyya in the year 636/1238 (twenty years before the Mongol invasion of Iraq). The last copyist is another Shaykh Salmān from the village of Srayjis (near Ṭarṭūs) in 1212/1797.

The three manuscripts were studied separately by Bar-Asher and Kofsky without discussing the connection between them.[66] A critical edition of *Risālat al-tawḥīd* was recently written by Tariq Rajab.[67]

al-Ḥusayn ibn Hārūn al-Baghdādī

30. *Kitāb al-badʾ wa-ʾl-iʿāda* (*BI*)
This book is included in the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* VI, pp. 425–472. Its author is probably the younger brother of al-Ṣāʾigh, also a resident of Baghdad. Like his brother, he seems to be a disciple of al-Khaṣībī,[68] probably of inferior degree, and a contemporary of al-Ḥusayn ibn Shuʿba al-Harrānī whom he cites in his book.[69] His main subject of study is the levels of transmigration. At the end the author claims that the present work is a summary of a larger book that bears the same title.

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[65] *MAHS*, fol. 48b–49a: *wa qad rattaba ʾl-masāʾil wa-allafaha wa-thannāhā al-qawl minhā ilā qawlihi man ʿabada ʾl-ism biʾl-ḥaqīqa fa-qad ʿabada ʾl- maʿnā*. This sentence is almost identical to the words of al-Khaṣībī to al-Ṣāʾigh in *MAHS*, fol. 50a: "Whoever worships the *maʿnā* through the truth of the *ism*, unifies God."

[66] Concerning *MAHS*, see M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, "L'ascension céleste du gnostique nusayrîte et le voyage nocturne du prophète Muḥammad", in M. A. Amir-Moezzi, (ed.) *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'islam. Ascensions célestes et itinéraires spirituels* (Louvain: Peeters, 1996), pp. 133–148.

Concerning *RT*, see M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, "A tenth-century Nuṣayrī treatise on the duty to know the mystery of divinity", *BSOAS* 58 (1995), pp. 243–250. About *SJ*, see idem, "An early dialogue on the relation between the *maʿnā* and the *ism*", *Le Muséon* 108 (1995), pp. 169–180. See Arabic text and translation to English of *SJ* and *MAHS* with notes in idem, *The Nusayrī-ʾAlawī Religion*, pp. 91–95, 95–97; 102–106, 106–109. In this book the original text Ms. Paris 1450 is used with my own translation.

[67] T. Rajab, *The unification of God in the ancient Nuṣayrī doctrine* (in Hebrew), M.A. thesis supervised by M. M. Bar-Asher, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002.

[68] Al-Ḥusayn ibn Hārūn claimed to have received a tradition from al-Khaṣībī; see *BI*, p. 452. He is probably the same author as Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān ibn Hārūn al-Baghdādī, the disciple of al-Khaṣībī, mentioned in *MA*, p. 203.

[69] Ibid., p. 432.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAbdī al-Numayrī/Namīrī

31. *al-Risāla al-Ḥarrāniyya* (RHA)
This epistle (included in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* IV, pp. 305–316) is the only available document written by Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAbdī al-Numayrī/Namīrī. We have no details about the author, but his *nisba* may indicate a kinship to the eponym Ibn Nuṣayr, himself an ʿAbdī Numayrī/Namīrī. The author, who seems to be a disciple of al-Jillī living in Ḥarrān, writes in the introduction that after the death of his master (al-Jillī) he was left with one of his books (which he does not specify) that demanded an explanation. The major subject of the epistle is the creation of the positive and negative *marātib*. In all likelihood Aḥmad's book was written before al-Ṭabarānī became a known shaykh, because his name and writings are not mentioned anywhere in this source.

Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

32. *Kitāb majmūʿ al-aʿyād* (*MA*)
This book's title is also *Sabīl rāhat al-arwāḥ wa-dalīl al-surūr wa-'l-afrāḥ ilā fāliq al-aṣbāḥ*. In this book, Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī (from Tiberias in northern present-day Israel) sums up the major doctrines of his predecessors. Unlike other Nuṣayrī writings, which are in most cases unorganized questions and answers, this book is arranged according to Nuṣayrī holidays, and each chapter contains the relevant traditions. As noted, the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* contains citations from *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* (*DKH*). A very useful critical edition of it (containing 229 pages) was published by Strothmann.[70] This text is based on two manuscripts, one copied by Ḥasan, "son" (disciple) of Shaykh Ḥaydar al-Aʿrajī in 1183/1769 and another copied by Muḥammad Sulaymān Muḥriz in 1329/1911.[71] I have obtained a third version of this book from the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* III, pp. 208–412. This last version, which is almost identical to the previous two, includes one valuable part that clarifies lines in Strothmann's version that were unreadable. These lines, which deal with Persian manifestations of the

[70] Abū Saʿīd Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, ed. R. Strothmann, *Der Islam* 27 (1944–1946) complete volume. German title: *Festkalender der Nusairier: Grundlegendes Lehrbuch im syrischen Alawitenstaat*.
[71] *MA*, p. 228.

deity, are important for the study of Zoroastrian influences on the Nuṣayrī religion.[72] The Strothmann version includes a collection of traditions transmitted by Jābir ibn Yazīd from the Imām al-Sādiq. This collection, entitled *Kitāb sharḥ al-sabʿīn* (*KSS*, Book/letter of explanation concerning the seventy [persons]) does not appear as a separate book, but rather as chapter (pp. 28–49 in *MA*). In the version of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* III (pp. 210–228) it appears as a separate source, not included in the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*. The opening *isnād* indicates that this source was preserved far from its original place. It was delivered from the Imām in Kufa, then transmitted in Mecca, and then in the Iranian cities of Ṭāluqān in 240/854 (Khurasān, present-day north Afghanistan) and Shirāz in 327/938. The identity of the last transmitter, a certain Abū ʿAlī al-Baṣrī is unknown, but the year of the last transmission indicates that the book could not have reached the Nuṣayrī community prior to the time of al-Khaṣībī. This short book deals with the mystical meaning of *ʿīd al-aḍḥā* (the holiday of sacrifice) and warns believers against the seventy personifications of the devil.

The *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* contains rare historical details concerning al-Khaṣībī, who lived only one century before its compilation. It is undoubtedly one of the most valuable sources for the study of the Nuṣayrī religion in its medieval version. Bar-Asher and Kofsky dedicated a chapter in their recent book concerning the Muslim holidays to the *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*.[73]

33. *Kitāb al-ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā* (*HIF*).

This book (*Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* III, pp. 45–116) is of special importance because of its practical purpose. According to the introduction, al-Ṭabarānī was asked by the members of the sect to compile the judicial decisions of his master al-Jillī. Most of them deal with the rules of the *taʿlīq*, the attachment of a disciple to his shaykh in order to initiate him into the secret esoteric knowledge. The *Ḥāwī* contains 120 questions and answers on this subject. The decisions of al-Jillī are based mainly on the teaching of his master al-Khaṣībī and on two books attributed to Ibn Nuṣayr which are unavailable: *Kitāb al-kāfī*

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[72] *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*, III, pp. 390–391 is the part that completes the missing lines in *MA*, pp. 209–210. The *Silsila* version of *Majmūʿal-aʿyād* is used only for this part.

[73] M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nusayrī-ʾAlawī Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 111–152.

li-'l-ḍidd al-munāfī and *Kitāb al-mawārid*. All the rituals and prayers are based on allegorical interpretation of the Qurʾān, and Muslim marriage regulations and terms serve as symbols for the attachment of the master to his disciple.

34–35. Letters by al-Ṭabarānī
Like his master, al-Jillī, al-Ṭabarānī sent letters to the members of the sect, answering their questions on theological matters. Two of these letters appear in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* III.

34. *al-Risāla al-murshida* (*RMU*, pp. 157–180) is an explanation of certain matters, mainly the *siyāqa*, which appeared in *al-Baḥth wa-'l-dalāla* (*BD*, item).

35. *al-Risāla al-munṣifa fī ḥaqīqat al-maʿrifa* (*RMHM*, pp. 181–194) deals with the nature of the *maʿnā* and its relation with the *ism*. In this letter al-Ṭabarānī cites poems from the *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* to back his explanations. Neither letter mentions or hints at its addressee.

36–37. Catechism of al-Ṭabarānī with his master al-Jillī
From the question-answer type of discussion between al-Ṭabarānī and his master al-Jillī, two short documents are available in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* III.

al-Masāʾil al-khāṣṣa (*MKH*, pp. 195–202) and *Masāʾil Bayrūt* (*MB*, pp. 203–205), both dealing with the subject of the divine revelation (*tajallī*). The second document is of value for the research of the history of the sect, because it contains the date and the place of the catechism.

38–42. Other books by Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

38. *Risālat al-ẓuhūr wa-'l-buṭūn* (*RZB*, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* III, pp. 15–18). This epistle is a catechism in the form of a dialogue held between al-Ṭabarānī and his master al-Jillī concerning the appearance of the three aspects of the deity and the possibility that one of them would appear in the form of another.

39. *al-Jawhariyya al-kalbiyya* (*JK*, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* III, pp. 19–40), is an unorganized discussion of the *ahl al-marātib* and their manifestations. The explanation for this title is unknown.

40. *al-Baḥth wa-'l-dalāla* (*BD*), al-Ṭabarānī's commentary to the *Rāstbāshiyya* is discussed above (see item 14).

Two other books are available in Ms. Hamburg 304
41–42. *Kitāb al-maʿārif* (*KM*, fol. 1a–126b) and *Kitāb al-dalāʾil fī maʿrifat al-masāʾil* (*DMM*, fol. 141a–207b), which is also in the *Silsilat al-turāth* al-ʿAlawī III (pp. 117–156, the version used here). The *Dalāʾil* deals with the gnosis or the inner knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the believer concerning several subjects such as the manifestation of the deity in historical figures and the role of Ibn Nuṣayr as *bāb*.

The *Dalāʾil* is an unsystematic series of questions and answers on a variety of religious topics. For the study of the *Maʿārif*, the recent research of Bar-Asher and Kofsky is used.[74]

43. *Akhbār wa-riwāyāt ʿan mawālīnā ahl al-bayt minhum al-salām* (*ARM*).
This source, which is part of Ms Hamburg 303, was published in a critical edition by Strothmann.[75] This scholar attributed it to Shaykh Maḥmūd Baʿamra, who is merely its copyist. The text of Baʿamra was recopied in 1274/1857.[76] The date of this anonymous source is unknown, but several traditions are transmitted from al-Khaṣībī's successor in Syria, Muḥammad al-Jillī, or his disciples (including al-Ṭabarānī in one place). This, together with its content and style of literary Arabic, may indicate that these traditions were compiled at the end of the tenth century or in the eleventh century by one of al-Jillī's disciples. In one place, the author notes that a tradition was transmitted by al-Jillī in the year 384/994 in Aleppo, but does not specify if it

[74] M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, "Dogma and ritual in *Kitāb al-Maʿārif* by the Nuṣayrī theologian Abū Saʿīd Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī (d. 426/1034–35)", *Arabica* 52 (2005), pp. 43–65.
[75] *Akhbār wa-riwāyāt ʿan mawālīnā ahl al-bayt minhum al-salām*, in R. Strothmann, "Esoterische Sonderthemen bei den Nusairi: Geschichte und Traditionen von den Heiligen Meistern aus dem Prophetenhaus", *Abhandungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958). The acronym *ARM* refers to the Arabic text, pp. 1–26.
[76] See colophon in the Arabic text of *ARM*, p. 26.

was he who received it.[77] One tradition in this document is also found in al-Ṭabarānī's *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*.[78] The contents include unorganized Ghulāt traditions transmitted by known members of the Nuṣayrī sect on a variety of subjects such as the *habṭa*, Docetism, transmigration, and attacks against the *Muqaṣṣira*.

44–51. The following sources were written by the Banū Shuʿba, members of a prominent Nuṣayrī family active in Ḥarrān during the tenth/eleventh centuries.

Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī

44–45. *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn* (*HAD*)
This book (*Silsilat al-turāth* al-ʿAlawī IV, pp. 11–179) is probably the most important work of the Banū Shu'ba. It was written by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī, disciple of al-Khaṣībī and al-Jillī. According to its introduction, the author sums up his rich library of 150 books of mysticism of the *muwaḥḥidūn*, to which he adds what he has found suitable from another group of 250 books from other mystical Shīʿī groups, especially those of the *mukhammisa*, to whom he shows respect. Al-Ḥasan, who was probably old when he wrote the book, expresses his personal anxiety at dying as a *muqaṣṣir* (with insufficient mystical education) as well as his general fear of the lack of guidance in the *ghayba* period. Both fears led him to write this book, which is rich in citations from Ghulāt and Nuṣayrī literature. Other citations include books written or transmitted by the rival Isḥāq al-Aḥmar, which cannot be found in other sources of the sect. Most of the books mentioned in this document are unavailable today. Thus, this source has a special bibliographical value.

The major issues dealt with in the book are the nature of the *ahl al-marātib* and the levels of transmigrations. The most outstanding part is the detailed table of the *ahl al-marātib*, which al-Ḥasan probably copied from the lost *Kitāb al-marātib wa-'l-daraj* of ʿAbdallā ibn Muʿāwiya (see table in Appendix 4).[79] He seems to have been influenced by Greek philosophy and cites Plato and Aristotle to back his

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[77] *ARM*, p. 6.
[78] Compare *ARM*, p. 13 with *MA*, pp. 108–109; tradition of Docetism in Karbalāʾ.
[79] See *ADM*, pp. 88–89. The table was copied later by ʿAlī ibn Ḥamza al-Ḥarrānī (see below, item 49) in *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif* (=*HAIH*), pp. 275–276.

doctrines. Generally, Greek influence is typical of the literature of the Banū Shuʿba.

The *Ḥaqāʾiq* is followed by an epistle appended to it, which is entitled *Risāla mūḍiḥat ḥaqāʾiq al-asrār* (*MHAD*, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* IV, pp. 181–185). In this epistle, al-Ḥasan adds an explanation of the book based on al-Khaṣībī's *al-Risāla al-rāstbāshiyya* (see above, item 14).

46. *Masāʾil Abū* [sic] *Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī* (*MHIS*, *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* IV, pp. 187–190) is a short catechism of 13 questions and answers between al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī and his master al-Khaṣībī concerning the relationship between the *maʿnā* and the *ism*. For reasons unknown, al-Khaṣībī is very brief in his answers and sometimes even unwilling to answer.[80] This might indicate that al-Ḥasan was still at an early stage of initiation when he asked these questions.

47. *Kitāb tuḥfat al-ʿuqūl ʿan āl al-Rasūl* (*TU*)
This book, included in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* V (pp. 7–318), is a completely orthodox Shīʿī book containing no trace of mystical or Nuṣayrī doctrine, and probably served the sect for general studies of Shīʿism for non-initiated members. The book is a collection of quasi-historical letters and succession testaments of the Prophet Muḥammad and his descendants, the eleven Imāms (the twelfth and last Imām was hidden after his birth according to Shīʿī tradition). The last part includes an odd addition of what the author considers God's orders to Moses and to Jesus, and a short chapter of an apocryphal sermon of Jesus from the New Testament. The book concludes with an apologetic testament of al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar concerning the backing given to him by the Imām against his rivals in Kufa. This part, like the rest of the book, lacks mystical doctrines and terminology. The *Tuḥfat al-ʿuqūl* could also have been a product of *taqiyya*, like al-Khaṣībī's *al-Hidāya al-kubrā*. Unfortunately, information concerning the author, al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī, is too limited to draw any conclusion concerning the purpose of this book. Since this is an Imāmī work, it became part of the canonical Shīʿī literature.[81]

[80] See, for example, *MHBS*, p. 190, question 9; al-Khaṣībī feels uncomfortable answering a question.

[81] The title appears in the plural *Tuḥaf*: al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Shuʿba

48. *Kitāb al-tamḥīṣ* (*KT*)
This short book (*Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* V, pp. 319–348), like the previous one, is not of a mystical nature. Its purpose is to explain to the believers that their suffering in life wipes out their sins. Al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī uses Imāmī traditions to support his explanations and demands that believers lead an ascetic and patient way of life. This source may indicate the impoverished situation of the sect in the author's period.

ʿAlī ibn Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī

49. *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif fī ithbāt al-ḥaqq ʿalā ʾl-mubāyin wa-ʾl-muḥālif* (*HAIH*)
For this book, the complete version in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* IV (pp. 240–285) is used. One chapter from this source (identical to ibid., pp. 256–257) is cited in Ms. Paris 1450, fol. 51b–53a. A possible reason for its citation here was discussed earlier. According to its anonymous introduction, a copy of it was dedicated to a certain *amīr* (commander) Abū ʾl-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar in 408/1017.[82] The purpose of *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif* (the proof of the mystic) is defined in its title: to show the believers the right path in a time of confusion and disagreement between the leaders of the sect.[83] The main issues in this book are the proof of God's unity, Docetism, and the transmigration of souls. On this last subject the author cites Plato and Aristotle to back his claims, a typical device practiced by the Banū Shuʿba.

Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba ʾl-Ḥarrānī

50. *Kitāb al-uṣayfir* (*US*)
This document is the first manuscript of the Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1450 (fol. 2a–40a) and also appears in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* IV (pp. 195–238). Its author, Shaykh Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba (or Shaʿba) ʾl-Ḥarrānī, may have been the son of the previous shaykh, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī. The book is cited in a twelfth-century source, the

al-Ḥarranī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl ʿan āl al-Rasūl* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 1969/ Qomm: Maktabat Baṣīrātī, 1974). In this book the Beirut version is used.

[82] *HAIH*, p. 240.

[83] Ibid., pp. 240–241.

Munāẓarat Shaykh al-Nashshābī (see below, item 52).[84] The word *uṣayfir* (small and yellow) is rare in Arabic and appears in Muslim tradition as the color of the sunbeams in heaven.[85] The *Uṣayfir* has not yet been the subject of a specific study.[86] It deals with a variety of Nuṣayrī doctrines in no particular order, for example the Trinity and its human manifestations, the *marātib*, the *ṣirāṭ* and mystical explanations of Qurʾānic verses. It contains Neoplatonic terms that are absent in other sources, which combined with the fact that the *Uṣayfir* is not cited in any of the sect's sources before the thirteenth century, may imply that this text is one of the latest of the Banū Shuʿba documents. The manuscript, copied in 1208/1793, is the only Nuṣayrī manuscript that contains additions of the Sunni authorities to its colophon.[87]

51. *Risālat ikhtilāf al-ʿālamayn* (*RIA*)

This short epistle, included in *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* IV (pp. 287–303), is of tremendous value for research of the Nuṣayrī sect. It treats the sanctification of al-Khaṣībī as part of the *ahl al-marātib*. The beginning focuses on a general explication of the two parts of the *marātib*, the earthly and the illuminated. The author views Plato and Aristotle as personifications of the deity for the first time in the sect's writings. His citations from al-Ṭabarānī support the hypothesis that Muḥammad is the last of the Banū Shuʿba. The document contains valuable biographical accounts from al-Khaṣībī's childhood and his attachment to al-Jannān; despite some legendary aspects that should be excluded, the historical value of these is unquestionable.

[84] The citation is very short, one rhymed line against the personification of God in *Munāẓarat Shaykh al-Nashshābī* (*MN*, see below, item 52), fol. 103b. Compare with the identical line in *US*, fol. 3a–4b: "A deep understanding of God through figures is the worship of the devil" (*maʾrifat Allāh fī ʾl-abdān ʿibādat al-shayṭān*).

[85] The anonymous French writer at the beginning of the manuscript suggests that *Uṣayfir* should be translated as "livre d'or", and admits that there may be other significations; see *US*, introduction before fol. 1, p. 1. Concerning the color *uṣayfir* in heaven, which is followed by another color, *ukhayḍir* (green?), see Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi-sharḥ al-nawawī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1990), vol. 3, *Kitām al-Īmān*, p. 32.

[86] Parts of it were studied and compared to other sources in Bar-Asher and Kofsky, "L'ascension céleste du gnostique nusayrite", pp. 133–148.

[87] *US*, fol. 37b–40a.

Yūsuf ibn al-ʿAjūz al-Nashshābī al-Ḥalabī

52. *Munāẓarat Shaykh al-Nashshābī* (*MN*)
This manuscript appears in Ms. Paris 1450, fol. 67b–155a. It was copied by Shaykh Ḥasan al-Khaṭīb ibn Shaykh Manṣūr in 1211/1796. According to the colophon, its completion that year was the occasion of a celebration by two villages in north- western Syria, Ṣāfītā and ʿAkkār.[88] The treatise has tremendous importance for the study of the Nuṣayrī sect. It represents an internal theological dispute (*nunāẓara*) concerning the nature of the divine trinity led by Shaykh Yūsuf ibn al-ʿAjūz al-Nashshābī al-Ḥalabī, as told by his anonymous disciple. Although it was assumed that this text dates from the thirteenth century, details in the contents prove that it is belongs to the beginning of the twelfth century.[89] The text gives a rare glimpse into the life of the Nuṣayrīs in this period. Moreover, the *Munāẓara* mentions historical leaders of the Nuṣayrīs from the eleventh century who are unknown from other sources. The theological aspects of this manuscript were studied by Bar-Asher and Kofsky.[90]

Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī

53–54. Two sources composed by al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī (the military and spiritual leader of the sect in the thirteenth century) are available and were studied by the Syrian Asʿad ʿAlī, mentioned earlier in connection with the *Dīwān al-muntajab* (*DMA*, see above, item 26). He published a monograph on al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī, containing his two most important compositions: *Dīwān al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī* (*DMS*)[91] and *Risāla tazkiyat al-nafs fī maʿrifat bawāṭin al-ʿibādāt al-khams*

[88] *MN*, fol. 155.

[89] See the discussion concerning the dating of this document in Chapter 1.

[90] M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, "The Nusayrī doctrine of ʿAlī's divinity and the Nusayrī trinity according to an unpublished treatise from the 7th/13th century", *Der Islam* 72 (1995), pp. 258–292.

[91] A. A. ʿAlī, *Maʿrifat Allāh wa'l-Makzūn al-Sinjārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Rāʾid al-ʿArabī, 1972), vol. 2, pp. 24–255. According to ʿAlī, his version of the *Dīwān of al-Makzūn* is based on the original available in Damascus Ẓāhiriyya, Ms. Arab 8758, containing 356 pages, as well as four other private versions of the sect; see A. A. ʿAlī, *Maʿrifat Allāh wa-ʾl-Makzūn al-Sinjārī*, vol. 2, pp. 13–15. Another printed version of the Dīwān was published in Lebanon: Hāshim ʿUthman, *Dīwān a-Makzūn al-Sinjārī* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 2008).

(*RTN*).[92] ʿAlī chose to omit chapters 3–6 from the *Tazkiyat al-nafs*, which deal with the mystical meaning of the first four pillars of Islam. In his introduction to the *Dīwān*, he admits that he had excluded 77 of the 458 *qaṣīda*s, which "did not fit with the spirit of Makzūn".[93] Unfortunately, the original manuscripts of al-Makzūn are inaccessible. However, a study of an original manuscript of the *Dīwān* by Paul Nwyia fills the gaps in the work of ʿAlī.[94]

ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ibn Manṣūr al-Suwayrī

55. Shaykh al-Suwayrī's *Urjūza* (*SUR*) is a poem in the tempo of *rajaz* (MS. Manchester 254, fol. 217b–249b). It was written in memory of Ra's Bāsh (instead of the Persian: Rāst Bāsh) al-Daylamī (ʿĪzz al-Dawla) in 708/1308 and is the only available document of the sect from the fourteenth century. Unfortunately, it does not reveal any historical event of its time or preceding periods. A certain Tawbān al-Fatā, mentioned once, may be a reference to the Nuṣayrī leader Shaykh Ḥātim al-Ṭawbānī. The poem's main issues are the abstract nature of God, the *ahl al-marātib* and God's appearance in history.

Relevant sources from the nineteenth century

The following sources could be considered modern, but they contain older materials most relevant to the medieval period.

56–58. The catechism style, or the question-answer form of dialogue between the Nuṣayrī shaykhs and their disciples, is known from the accounts of al-Khaṣībī's *majlis* (items 28, 29). It constitutes a continuance of the *sāʾil–ʿālim/masʾala–jawāb* (questioner–instructor or question–answer) form, which describes dialogues between *imām*s and their *bāb* in previous periods (for example *Kitāb al-usūs*, see above, item 4). Dussaud suggests that the modern Nuṣayrī Catechism, as known from several texts from the nineteenth century, seems to

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[92] A. A. ʿAlī, *Maʿrifat Allāh wa-'l-Makzūn al-Sinjārī*, vol. 2, pp. 265–304, based on three private versions, according to ibid., pp. 260–261.

[93] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 15.

[94] P. Nwyia, "Makzūn al-Sinjārī, poète mystique alaouite", *Studia Islamica*, 40 (1974), pp. 87–113. At the beginning of the article Nwyia criticizes the way Asʿad ʿAlī omits all the poems dealing with the Nuṣayrī doctrines; see ibid., p. 92.

reflect a Christian influence,[95] which is a very logical assumption in view of the Christian missionary initiative in Syria in that period. A Druze Catechism written in the same period is a good example of such an influence. Moreover, the modern Nuṣayrī Catechism contains Christian elements that are not found in medieval texts.[96] The available catechism texts are:

56. A catechism following quotations from ʿAlī's speeches (*khuṭba*, pl. *khuṭab*) in Kufa, in which he declares his divinity (the abbreviation *KHC* stands for *khuṭba* and catechism). This manuscript is available in two versions: Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 5188 and Ms. Kiel 19. The second version, published by Strothmann with a useful index, is used here.[97] Although it is impossible to determine its date, the contents of this text may indicate it is older than the modern catechism texts. It includes citations from a variety of medieval sources of the sect and it lacks the Christian terminology that is typical of the modern Nuṣayrī Catechism. Instead, there are characteristics of medieval texts, such as Persian influence and attacks on the rival Isḥāqiyya sect. The manuscript seems incomplete. It lacks a colophon and there are no details about its copyist. It could be argued that this text is a modern collection of old texts to be learned by an initiate in one of the more advanced stages of his initiation (compare with the next item, *Taʿlīm diyānat al-Nuṣayriyya*, which seems to be a primary text for initiates).

57. *Kitāb taʿlīm diyānat al-Nuṣayriyya* (*TDN*)
The printed Arabic text is used here, published with important notes and English translation by Bar Asher and Kofsky, based on Ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 6182 (fol. 1a–39a).[98] The main part of this source is a text prepared for the sect's religious shaykhs,

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[95] Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairis,* p. xxii.

[96] M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nusayrī-ʾAlawī Religion: An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p.166. As to the claim that the *TDN* was fabricated, see K. Firro, "The ʿAlawīs in modern Syria: From Nusayriyya to Islam via ʿAlawīya", *Der Islam* 82/1 (2005), pp. 7–8.

[97] R. Strothmann, "Morgenländische Geheimsekten in abendländischer Forschung und die Handschrift Kiel 19", in Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin 5 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1952), Arabic manuscript fol. 1b–27a, explanations and German translation pp. 2–42.

[98] M. M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nusayrī-ʾAlawī Religion*, pp. 200–221. For details and English translation of this text, see ibid., pp. 163–199.

the *khāṣṣa*. This part, as well as the others, deals with a variety of topics that an initiate must know by heart: for example, the nature of the Nuṣayrī divinity, the luminous and the earthly worlds and Nuṣayrī holidays and their meanings.

58. *Kitāb al-mashyakha* (*KMA*)
The "Manual of the Shaykhs", is the most problematic catechism source, since the manuscript is lost and only Lyde's extracts in English are available.[99]

It contains an explanation of the Nuṣayrī religion, but unlike other catechism texts, this one is not designated for initiates, but for shaykhs, in order to facilitate their teaching, as well as the prayers and ceremonies they organize. It seems also that this source was not a catechism, but was meant to help in composition of one. The last part is of particular interest, because it is the only available evidence of a contract between shaykhs and their initiates.[100]

Sulaymān al-Adhanī

59. *Kitāb al-bākūra al-Sulaymaniyya* (*BS*)
The complete title is *Kitāb al-bākūra al-Sulaymaniyya fī kashf asrār al-diyāna al-Nuṣayriyya*.[101] It was written by Sulaymān al-Adhanī (from Adana, southern Turkey), who became notorious for his exposure of the esoteric knowledge of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs. The publication of the book in 1864 was known to orientalists through an article published

[99] S. Lyde, *Asian Mystery Illustrated in the History, Religion, and Present State of the Ansaireeh or Nusairis of Syria* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), pp. 233–269. According to Lyde, the original manuscript contained 188 pages, copied by Shaykh Muḥammad of the village of Bishrago (this village could not be identified, but it might be the present-day village of Beshgharhi in the region of Latakiya) at the consecration of his nephew ʿAlī, son of Shaykh ʿĪd in 1239/1824.

[100] Ibid., pp. 256–269.

[101] In this book the original version is used: Sulaymān al-Adhanī, *Kitāb al-bākūra al-Sulaymaniyya fī kashf asrār al-diyāna al-Nuṣayriyya* (Beirut: [n.p.], 1862). In Lebanon, the book was printed by the anonymous publishers of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī*: Sulaymān al-Adhanī, *Kitāb al-bākūra al-Sulaymaniyya fī kashf asrār al-diyāna al-Nuṣayriyya* (Diyār ʿAql: Dār li-ajl al-Maʿrifa, 1988). Another version, printed more recently in Egypt, is full of printing errors; see Sulaymān Afandī al-Adhanī, *Kitāb al-bākūra al-Sulaymaniyya fī kashf asrār al-diyāna al-Nuṣayriyya "al-ʿAlawiyya"* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣaḥwa li'l-Nashr, 1990).

in that same year by the American Oriental Society.[102] According to his own book, which contains biographical sections, Sulaymān was a member of the privileged shaykhs (*khāṣṣa*) of his village, but the more he was initiated into the secrets of the Nuṣayrī religion the more he felt doubtful about its truth. He left the faith and converted in turn to Judaism, Islam and finally to Christianity. He decided to publish the secret of his sect in order to "expose their lies".[103] After publishing his book at his own expense in Beirut, he was seduced by his village to return to Adhana, where he was murdered.[104] The important part of his book is the anonymous[105] *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* (pp. 7–34), also called *Dustūr*, which is a prayer book containing sixteen chapters of which the date of composition is unknown (see further explanations in the discussion of initiation). There are certain Qurʾānic elements in the *Majmūʿ* as well as quotations from the Qurʾān itself. Al-Adhanī added commentary to each chapter, which is useful at times and at others deceptive. Other parts of the *Bākūra* contain details about the Nuṣayrī holidays, citations from different poems of well-known shaykhs and explanations of typical Nuṣayrī doctrines, such as transmigration and the *habṭa*. Although this source is of tremendous importance to the

[102] E. E. Salisbury, "'The Book of Sulaimān's First Ripe Fruit, disclosing the mystery of the Nusairian Religion', by Sulaimān Effendi of Adhanah; with copious extracts", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 8 (1864), pp. 227–308. Summarized again by B. H. Springett, *Secret Sects of Syria and the Lebanon: A Consideration of their Origin, Creed and Religious Ceremonies* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1922), pp. 140–175.

[103] *BS*, p. 84.

[104] I cannot accept Dr. Stéphane Valter's remark during my thesis defense on 27 February 2006, that the *Kitāb al-bākūra al-Sulaymaniyya* is a fake and unreliable source. Even if we accept that al-Adhanī's account is exceptional, one cannot deny the fact that his book contains a vast number of reliable terms, doctrines, traditions and other references to available medieval sources of the sect. As such, it cannot be excluded from the biography of any research in the field of the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī sect. See the same claim raised by the ʿAlawī writer Hāshim ʿUthmān, in K. Firro, "The Alawīs in modern Syria: From Nusayriya to Islam via Alawiya", *Der Islam* 82/1 (2005), pp. 5–9.

[105] Some French scholars attributed the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* to al-Khaṣībī; see Colonel Nieger, "Choix de documents sur le territoire des Alaouites (pays des Noseiris)", *RMM*, 49 (1922), p. 57; Massignon, "Esquisse", p. 643, item 24. However, this hypothesis is baseless and illogical considering the fact that in this text al-Khaṣībī and his grave (*maqām*) are already sanctified; see *BS*, p. 9. It seems that this mistake stems from a misunderstanding of Dussaud's bibliographical note concerning this book: "Nous ne possédons *aucun renseignement* sur sa composition, ni sur l'époque à laquelle il a été rédigé. L'auteur du *Kitab al-Bakourah* attribue à Al-Khoṣaibī la forme définitive de la doctrine et des prières noṣairīs". See R. Dussaud, *Histoire et eligion des Nosairîs* (Paris: Librairie Emile Bouillon, 1900), introduction p. xiv.

research of the Nuṣayrī religion, al-Adhanī's superficial explanations of the prayers he cites indicate that he was still at an early stage of initiation. As such, it seems he was unable to go into as much depth as a Nuṣayrī shaykh. It is unclear whether his citations are based on his memory, or on the books he possessed, but the authenticity of the parts found in other sources can be verified. The *Bākūra* served as the main source for Dussaud in his *Histoire et religion des Nosairis*, where he added his translation of the *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* into French.[106]

Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib al-Ṭawīl

60. *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (*TA*)

The *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (History of the ʿAlawīs) is a collection of quasi-historical Nuṣayrī traditions collected orally from educated members of the sect by Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib al-Ṭawīl, the Ottoman Governor of Ṭartụs, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was published in Turkey in 1919, and the present version was then published in Lādhiqiyya, Syria in 1924 (478 pages).[107] The book had two aims: the first was the need to preserve the sect's legacy for the new generation of educated ʿAlawīs, who were exposed to modernization. Al-Ṭawīl's motivation stemmed from his fear that his sect, living in poor conditions, would lose its unique identity. The second aim was the need to minimize the damage to their religion, incurred by its divulgation, by re-associating it with its Shīʿī source.

Al-Ṭawīl attempts to link Nuṣayrī history to that of the Shīʿīs and called them by the same name: ʿAlawīs. This bias and the lack of sacred tradition in the book are evidence that this source is not particularly reliable, historically speaking. Authentic historical facts are often hinted at, or referred to imprecisely. However, this source provides a general impression of the sect's situation in totally unknown periods in Nuṣayrī history.

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[106] Dussaud, *Histoire et Religion des Nosairîs*, Arabic text pp. 181–198, French translation pp. 161–179. See also *Revue des études islamiques* 2 (1928), pp. 191–192.

[107] See *REI*, ibid. The version used here is Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib al-Ṭawīl, *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (Lādhiqiyya: Dār al-Andalus, 1966).

Summary

Kufan Ghulāt

8th century

Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī (attributed)
1. *Umm al-kitāb* (UK)

Al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar al-Juʿfī (attributed)
2. *Kitāb al-haft wa-'l-aẓilla* (HA)
3. *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ* (KS)
4. *Kitāb al-usūs* (KU)
5. *al-Risāla al-Mufaḍḍaliyya* (RMUF)

Muḥammad ibn Sinān al-Zāhirī
6. *Kitāb al-ḥujub wa-'l-anwār* (HUA)
7. *Kitāb al-anwār wa-'l-ḥujub* (AUH)

Nuṣayrīs

9th century

Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr
8. *Kitāb al-akwār wa-'l-adwār al-Nūrāniyya* (AAN)
9. *Kitāb al-mithāl wa-'l-ṣūra* (MS)

Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Nakhaʿī
10. *Ādāb ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib* (AAM)

ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān al-Junbulānī:
11. *Kitāb īḍāḥ al-miṣbāḥ* (IM)

10th century

Al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī
12. *Kitāb al-hidāya al-kubrā* (HK)
13. *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* (DKH)
14. *al-Risāla al-rāstbāshiyya* (RR)
15. *Fiqh al-risāla al-rāstbāshiyya* (FRR)
16. *Risāla fī 'l-siyāqa* (RS)

Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Jillī
17. *Kitāb ḥāwī 'l-asrār* (KHA)
18. *Kitāb bāṭin al-ṣalāt* (BS)
19. *Risālat al-bayān* (RB)
20. *al-Risāla al-Masīḥiyya* (RM)

21. *al-Risāla al-Nuʿmāniyya* (RN)
22. *Risālat al-andiya* (RA)
23. *Risālat al-fatq wa-ʾl-ratq* (RFR)
24. *Risālat al-ḥurūf* (RH)
25. *Waṣiyyat al-Jillī li-Abī Saʿīd* (WJAS)

Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī
26. *Dīwān al-Muntajab al-ʿĀnī* (DMA)

Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Jisrī
27. *Risālat al-tawḥīd* (RT, fol. 42a–48a)

ʿAbdallāh ibn Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh
28. *Masāʾil ʿAbdallāh ibn Hārūn al-Ṣāʾigh* (MAHS)
29. al-Ṣāʾigh's visit to al-Jisrī (SJ)

Al-Ḥusayn ibn Hārūn al-Baghdādī
30. *Kitāb al-badʾ wa-ʾl-iʿāda* (BI)

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAbdī al-Numayrī/Namīrī
31. *al-iRsāla al-Ḥarrāniyya* (RHA)

11th century

Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
32. *Kitāb majmūʿ al-aʿyād* (MA)
33. *Kitāb al-ḥāwī fī ʿilm al-fatāwā* (HIF)
34. *al-Risāla al-murshida* (RMU, pp. 157–180)
35. *al-Risāla al-munṣifa fī ḥaqīqat al-maʿrifa* (RMHM)
36. *al-Masāʾil al-khāṣṣa* (MKH, pp. 195–202)
37. *Masāʾil Bayrūt* (MB, pp. 203–205)
38. *Risālat al-ẓuhūr wa-ʾl-buṭūn* (RZB)
39. *al-Jawhariyya al-kalbiyya* (JK)
40. *al-Baḥth wa-ʾl-dalāla* (BD)
41. *Kitāb al-maʿārif* (KM)
42. *Kitāb al-dalāʾil fī maʿrifat al-masāʾil* (DMM)

Anonymous collected traditions:
43. *Akhbār wa-riwāyāt ʿan mawālīnā ahl al-bayt minhum al-salām* (ARM)

Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī
44. *Ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-dīn* (HAD)
45. *Risāla mūḍiḥat ḥaqāʾiq al-asrār* (MHAD).
46. *Masāʾil Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī* (MHIS)
47. *Kitāb tuḥfat al-ʿuqūl ʿan āl al-Rasūl* (TU)
48. *Kitāb al-tamḥīṣ* (KT)

ʿAlī ibn Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī
49. *Ḥujjat al-ʿārif fī ithbāt al-ḥaqq ʿalā ʾl-mubāyin wa-ʾl-muḥālif* (HAIH)

Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba ʾl-Ḥarrānī
50. *Kitāb al-Uṣayfir* (US)
51. *Risālat ikhtilāf al-ʿālamayn* (RIA)

12th century
Yūsuf ibn al-ʿAjūz al-Nashshābī al-Ḥalabī
52. *Munāẓarat Shaykh al-Nashshābī* (MN)

13th century
Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī
53. *Dīwān al-Makzūn al-Sinjārī* (DMS)
54. *Risālat tazkiyat al-nafs fī maʿrifat bawāṭin al-ʿibādāt al-khams* (RTN)

14th century
55. Shaykh al-Ṣuwayrī's *Urjūza* (SAR)

19th century
56. *Khuṭba* and Catechism (KHC)
57. *Kitāb taʿlīm diyānat al-Nuṣayriyya* (TDN)
58. *Kitāb al-mashyakha* (KMA)

Sulaymān al-Adhanī
59. *Kitāb al-bākūra al-Sulaymaniyya* (BS)

20th century
Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib al-Ṭawīl
60. *Taʾrīkh al-ʿAlawiyyīn* (TA)

APPENDIX 2

TITLES AND CONTENTS OF UNAVAILABLE SOURCES

The following items are Shīʿī-Ghulāt and early Nuṣayrī sources, mostly from the eighth and ninth century, which are not available for research but are mentioned in the Nuṣayrī literature. Fragments of these sources point to their contents. They are arranged alphabetically by title, with their subject, place of appearance and other references, if available.

Kitāb aqrab al-asānīd / Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr—Appears only once in the context of the prohibition of wine. See: *IM*, p. 272.

Kitāb al-aẓilla wa-'l-ashbāḥ—An anonymous book, which is not Mufaḍḍal's *Haft wa-'l-aẓilla* (the fragments are not found in *HA*) and deals with the nature of the divine light, the relations between the *maʿnā* and the *ism* and the role of the *bāb*. See: *KMS*, p. 210; *KHA*, p. 209; *HAD*, p. 53. It may be identical to *Kitāb ashbāh wa-'l- aẓilla*. See: *MN*, fol. 114a–115a. Cat: Massignon, item 4, attributed to Mufaḍḍal.

Kitāb al-dustūr—A mysterious and anonymous book, which is not the Qurʾān but must be remembered by heart by initiates to the Nuṣayrī sect. See: *HIF*, pp. 50, 53, 65; *HAD*, p. 55. It is wrongly identified of with al-Adhanī's *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*.[1]

Kitāb al-faḥṣ wa-'l-baḥth / Abū Duhayba—Contains an "unorthodox" Nuṣayrī doctrine that all the Imāms were incarnations of the *maʿnā*. Deals with God's appearance to and disappearance from mankind. See: *MN*, fol. 118a, 123a. Cat: Massignon, item 40.

Kitāb al-ibtidāʾ / Abū Muḥammad (al-Ḥasan ibn Shuʿba ?)—This book deals with the creation of the world of light and its creatures, the *ahl al-marātib*. See: *HAIH*, p. 269.

[1] See this mistake in Massignon, "Esquisse", item 24, repeated in T. Olsson, "Imagery of divine epiphany in Nuṣayrī scriptures", *Acta Iranica* 28 (1988), pp. 408–409.

Kitāb al-kāfī li-'l-ḍidd al-munāfī / Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr—A book focusing on the subject of initiation, including the requirement that the *Dustūr* be remembered by heart (see item above). See: *HIF*, pp. 53, 105, 110, 112.

Kitāb al-mawārid / Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr—Deals with initiation into the Nuṣayrī sect. See: *HIF*, pp. 49, 53.

Kitāb al-marātib wa-'l-daraj / Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya—An important source concerning the "creatures of rank" (*ahl al-marātib*). The explanations are attributed to the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. See: *FRR*, p. 121; *HAD*, pp. 83–89, 101 (transmitted by al-Khaṣībī); *HAIH*, pp. 275–276; *KIA*, p. 290; *RHA*, pp. 307–310. Cat: Catafago, item 2 as *al-Marātib wa-'l-dirāj*.

Kitāb maʿrifat al-bāriʾ / ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-ʿAqīqī—The available fragment of this books deals with the mystical meaning of the *rūḥ al-qudus* (holy spirit). See: *HAD*, p. 29.

Risālat rayḥānat al-rūḥ / The *amīr* Jaysh ibn Nāsiḥ al-Dawla—According to Muḥammad ibn Shuʿba, this book was written by his "grandfather and master" (apparently his teacher's master) and was dedicated to a certain Shaykh Abū 'l-Waqqār al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAmmār. The title of the author, which was typical of the local leaders of castles in Syria and Iraq, may indicate that he was both a patron and an initiated member of the sect. The only available fragment is a citation from al-Jillī's explanation of the existence of two worlds, *ʿalawī* and *suflī*, the "upper" spiritual luminous world and the "lower" material world. See: *RIA*, p. 296.

Kitāb manhaj al-ʿilm wa-'l-bayān (also called *al-ʿIṣmiyya*) / ʿIṣmat al-Dawla—Containing a rejection or attack against "unorthodox" groups in the Nuṣayrī sect. See: MN, fol. 142a.

Kitāb al-mutarjam[2] *bi-kitāb al-kursī wa-'l-qalb wa-'l-qidad wa-'l-qudra* / Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Madāʾinī (?)—The book

[2] Concerning the meaning of the word *mutarjam*, see note 3.

deals with the creation of the world (which is different from the common Nuṣayrī tradition). See: *HAD*, pp. 80–82.

Kitāb al-mutarjam bi-kitāb al-shawāhid / Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Nakhaʿī al-Aḥmar—The available fragment deals with God's appearance in a docetic form. See: *HAD*, p. 34.

Kitāb al-mutarjam[3] *li-'l-maḥmūdīn wa-'l-madhmūmīn* / Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Mihrān (?)—The book deals with the dual nature of the world, its partition into praised and condemned creatures. See: *KHA*, p. 198; *HAD*, p. 118.

Kitāb al-radd ʿalā 'l-murtadd / Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī—Contains a list of personifications of the *maʿnā*. See: *KMA*, p. 236. It is an answer to a *murtadd* (apostate). Cat: Massignon, item 44, assumed that the *murtadd* is Ibn Khallād.

Kitāb al-sabʿīn / Abū ʿAlī al-Baṣrī—This book, which should not be confused with Maymūn al-Ṭabarānī's *Sharḥ al-sabʿīn*, treats the subject of the seventy transmigrations of the soul. See: *HIF*, p. 65; *HAIH*, p. 280.

Kitāb al-tajrīd / ?—Appears in a prayer connected with wine. See: *KMA*, p. 252. Cat: Catafago, item 6; Massignon, item 83, attributed in both to Shaykh Ḥātim al-Ṭawbānī.

Kitāb al-taklīf / Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Nakhaʿī al-Aḥmar—The book deals with God's appearance to his creatures. See: *HAD*, p. 36. Could be identical to the same author's *Kitāb bāṭin al-taklīf*, which treats the same issue. See: *HAD*, pp. 49, 174. Cat (of *Bāṭin al-Taklīf*): Catafago, item 15 attributed to Muḥammad ibn Sinān.

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[3] The meaning of the words *mutarjam li-* are unclear. It could be understood simply as "translated", i.e. the source of the book was not in Arabic originally, probably translated from Persian. In *HAD*, p. 118, the book is cited as *Kitāb al-marātib al-mutarjam bi'l-maḥmūdīn wa-'l-madhmūmīn*, a title that may indicate that the meaning of *mutarjam bi-* is "commented". In that case, the book was written as a commentary to Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya's *Kitāb al-marātib wa-'l-daraj*.

Kitāb al-tanbīh / Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Aḥmar—Deals with the role of the divine power (*qudra*) and its part in the creation. See: *KHA*, p. 209; *KMS*, p. 210; *HAD*, p. 45.

Kitāb al-tawḥīd / Muḥammad ibn Sinān al-Ẓāhirī—An important source including explanations attributed to the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, concerning several issues including the creation of the world with letters and with the divine will (*mashīʾa*), and the world of light and the creation of the creatures of light. See: *MS*, pp. 210, 225; *KHA*, pp. 164 (transmitted by al-Khaṣībī), 167, 175, 203; *HAD*, pp. 22, 25–29; *US*, fol. 4a. Not to be confused with Mufaḍḍal's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, which is an Imāmī book. Cat: Heinz Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten. Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der Ghulāt und die Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums", *Der Islam* 55 (1978), pp. 222, 240; *Der Islam* 58 (1981), p. 83; Catafago, item 7.

Kitāb al-ẓuhūrāt / Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar—Deals with the appearances of the divinity in human history. See: *RR*, p. 39.

Kitāb al-yūnān / ?—Containing the personifications of the *bāb*. Cat: Catafago, item 21, as *Kitāb al-Yūnān li-Ahl al-Shimāl*.

al-Risāla al-Miṣriyya / Attributed to al-Khaṣībī—Contains a list of the names of ʿAlī. See: *KMA*, p. 236. Cat: Catafago, item 17; Massignon, item 66, attributed to Muḥammad ibn Muqātil Qittīʿī.

Sharḥ kitāb al-jawhar—The commentary of *Kitāb al-jawhar*, an anonymous book dealing with the relations between the *ism* and the *bāb*. See: *AAN*, p. 132. Cat: It may be the commentary of the anonymous *al-Risāla al-jawhariyya*, in Catafago, item 38 or the commentary of *Kitāb al-jawāhir* attributed to al-Ṭabarānī, in Massignon, item 50.

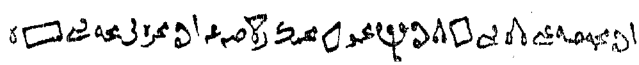
APPENDIX 3

CIPHERS IN THE WRITINGS OF AL-ṬABARĀNĪ

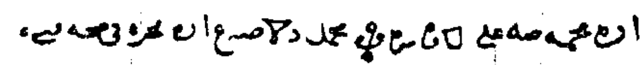
In some of his writings al-Ṭabarānī uses ciphers and secret letters in order to conceal names or phrases, a means of concealment not found in other Nuṣayrī sources. The disciples of al-Ṭabarānī copied them and probably transmitted their secret meaning by rote. The phenomenon is found in six places in al-Ṭabarānī's sources.

Mystical letters

Strange letters appear in *MA*, p. 117; Strothmann used two manuscripts of this text. Version N (copied in 1329/1911):



Version C (copied in 1138/1725) is shorter and the letters are similar but not identical:



These forms appear in the context of an appearance of al-Ḥusayn before the angels and prophets in Karbalāʾ: "…until God the mighty and glorified. [The ciphered line follows:] Oh Mufaḍḍal! This is, in the name of God, the end which has nothing above it…" In the case of ciphers, in order to present to the reader a more understandable form, no transliteration is used:

...حتى الله عز وجل [the ciphered line] يا مفضل هذه والله الرقعة التي ليس فوقها شيء...

The use of Arabic without diacritic points in the ciphered line is typical of mystical purposes, for example in talismans.[1] Different ciphers in the form of mystical signs and numbers appear in the tenth-century

[1] See, for example, the Shīʿī amulets in A. Fodor, "Amulets from the Islamic world", *Budapest Studies in Arabic* 2 (1988), pp. 130, 134–136.

treatises of the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī*s (propagandists) Abū ʿĪsā al-Murshid[2] and Jaʿfar ibn Manṣūr al-Yaman.[3] Ciphers similar to those of al-Ṭabarānī are found in the thirteenth-century book of magic of Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Būnī.[4] Canaan gives some similar examples, but his list does not include most of the forms mentioned so far. Some of the mystical forms used by al-Ṭabarānī are similar to the Jewish Kabalistic "angelic letters" or "the Alphabet of Metatron".[5]

In *HIF* (p. 79) there is another kind of cipher in the context of prohibition to a believer who is not initiated into the secrets of the sect: "It is prohibited to a believer to [cipher combining letters and one numeral] until he knows the personifications [*shakhṣ*] of this day and of its night":

لا يجوز لمؤمن ان مي طي م مح دم سي ام سي ما سص ي 7 حتى يعلم شخص ذلك اليوم وليلته

This combination defies deciphering or interpretation.

Initials

In *DMM* (p. 122) in the context of the knowledge transmitted from the "fathers" (teachers) to their initiated "sons" (disciples), "the pure knowledge is [ciphered letters]":

...الباطن المحض ع ع ع ع م م م م ح ح ح ح.

These are probably the initials of the Imāms and other associated saints (*ʿayn* for the four Imāms called ʿAlī, *mīm* for the three Muḥammads and maybe Mūsā al-Kāẓim and *ḥāʾ* for the *ḥāʾāt*: Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and

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2 S. M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Leiden: Brill, 1983), p. 13; see the Arabic text, fol. 142, lines 2,6,8,9.

3 See Jaʿfar ibn Manṣūr al-Yaman, *Kitāb al-kashf*, ed. R. Strothmann (London/New York/Bombay: Oxford University Press/Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1952), Strothmann's introduction with the decipherment of the signs and the pages where they appear in the text.

4 Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Būnī, *Shams al-maʿārif al-kubrā* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-Miṣriyya, 1960), pp. 88, 214, 234, 236, 241.

5 T. Canaan, "The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans", *Berytus* 5 (1938), p. 141; I. Weinstock, "The Alphabet of Metatron and its commentary" (in Hebrew), *Temirin* 2 (1981), pp. 53–54 (list of letters), 56, 58 (used by the twelfth-century Spanish Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra), 61, 62–76.

Muḥsin as well as the eleventh Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī). This explanation can be deduced from *DKH*, fol. 70a, 101b. (See the list of the Imāms in Appendix 5.)

Gematric values[6]

The two following examples are gematric numbers (value of letters according to the Hebrew alphabetic order). *DMM* (p. 148) has the missing cipher: "He is God whom there is no other but him [ciphered numbers]":

هو الله الذي لا اله الا هو 683418111

The same numbers appear complete again (p. 150), with the addition of three numbers, after the name of God:

...ربه 161683418111.

These numbers can be deciphered by dividing them into three groups as follows:

.1616–8341–8111
قائف = 1 (100) 1 1 8(80)/املح = 1 4 (40=) 3(30=) 8 / وقوي =6 1(100) 6 1(10).

Meaning: "The One who knows from signs [referring to the *jafr*, the science of divination by signs and ciphers] the most beautiful and the powerful".

[6] Jafr/Gematric values of Arabic letters:

ن	م	ل	ك	ي	ط	ح	ز	و	ه	د	ج	ب	ا
٥٠	٤٠	٣٠	٢٠	١٠	٩	٨	٧	٦	٥	٤	٣	٢	١
غ	ظ	ض	ذ	خ	ث	ت	ش	ر	ق	ص	ف	ع	س
١٠٠٠	٩٠٠	٨٠٠	٧٠٠	٦٠٠	٥٠٠	٤٠٠	٣٠٠	٢٠٠	١٠٠	٩٠	٨٠	٧٠	٦٠

When a point appears on a number it means multiplied by ten (for example 2=20) and when it appears to the left it means multiplied by hundred (for example .2 = 200). Unfortunately, the publishers of the *Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿAlawī* copied the numbers but ignored these points completely and they had to be reconstructed.

The last example is the easiest to decipher because of its simple gematric values and its appearance without the use of ciphers in other versions of the same text. It appears in *MA* (p. 99) in the context of *ʿĪd al-firāsh*, the tradition of ʿAlī's sacrifice to save the Prophet's life. The latter slept in Muḥammad's bed instead of the Prophet when the infidels of Quraysh came at night to kill him. When they found ʿAlī in his place, Muḥammad and his companion Abū Bakr (who is most hated by the Shīʿīs) were hiding in a cave. According to this text Muḥammad was worried about his cousin while "[ciphered name of Abū Bakr] did not feel sorry for him":

...621 (=ابو) 222 (=بكر)...لم يحزن ...

The purpose of the secret forms and numbers was to conceal the most sacred description or names of the divinity or, on the contrary, to conceal the name of a cursed personality who was venerated by the Sunnīs, as an act of *taqiyya* (caution). It is possible that these mystical forms and numbers are still used by the ʿAlawī shaykhs today. Research conducted during the French Mandate period in the 1920s reveals similar mystical forms in use in an amulet of the sect.[7]

[7] See Colonel Nieger, "Choix de documents sur le territoire des Alaouites", *Revue du Monde Musulman* 49 (Mars 1922), pp. 64–69.

APPENDIX 4

THE TABLE OF RANKS BASED ON ABDALLĀH IBN MUʿĀWIYA'S *KITĀB AL-MARĀTIB WA-ʾL-DARAJ*

The following is the table of the ranks of *ahl al-marātib* in the "great world of lights", their symbols (all of them are words from the Qurʾān) and their numbers, followed by the table of "the small material world".[1]

المراتب العلويّة لعالم الكبير، المراتب، الدّرج

الغمام ٦٠	الأفلاك ٧٥	الشّموس ٧٥	الأنوار ٧٠	الآيات ٥٠	الحجب ٤٠	الأسماء ٣٠	الأبواب	٤٠٠
البروق ٨٨	الرّعود ٧٠	النّجوم ٧٧	الأهلّة ٧٠	الأقمار ٧٠	المغارب ٧٠	المشارق ٥٠	الأيتام	٥٠٠
الدّعاء ١٢٠	الجّهاد ٩٥	الهجرة ٩٠	الصّيام ٧٥	الحجّ ٨٠	الزّكاة ٧٠	الصّلاة ٧٠	النّقباء	٦٠٠
الصّواعق ١٣٠	السّحاب ١٢٠	الرّياح ١١٠	الأنهار ١٠٠	البحار ٩٠	المعصرات ٨٠	الجّبال ٧٠	النّجباء	٧٠٠
السّبل ١٣٠	الأصال ١١٠	الغدوّ ١٣٠	العشيّ ١٢٠	الغداة ١٢٠	النّهار ١٠٠	اللّيل ٩٠	المختصّون	٨٠٠
البيع ١٥٠	الصّوامع ١٤٥	الطّير ١٤٠	النّحل ١٣٠	الإبل ١٢٠	الدّواب ١١٥	الأنعام ١٠	المخلصون	٩٠٠
التّين ١٩٠	الزّيتون ١٧٠	الرّمّان ١٧٠	الأعناب ١٥٠	النّخل ١٥٠	المساجد ١٤٠	البيوت ١٣٠	الممتحنون	١١٠٠

[1] Based on the two almost identical versions: the complete version presented here; see *HAD*, pp. 88–89; and another, lacking the symbols in "the small material world"; see *HAIH*, pp. 275–276.

المقرّبون ١٤٠٠٠	الافلاك ٧٥	الغمام ٦٠
الكروبيّون ١٥٠٠٠	الرعود ٧٠	البروق ٨٨
الرّوحانيّون ١٦٠٠٠	الجّهاد ٩٥	الدّعا ١٢٠
المقدّسون١٧٠٠٠	السّحاب ١٢٠	الصّواعق ١٣٠
السّائحون ١٨٠٠٠	الأصال ١١٠	السّبل ١٣٠
المستمعون ١٩٠٠٠	الصّوامع ١٤٥	البيع ١٥٠
اللاّحقون ٢٠٠٠٠	الزّيتون ١٧٠	التّين ١٩٠

APPENDIX 5

LIST OF THE IMĀMS AND THEIR BĀBS[1]

Imām	*bāb*
ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/660)	Salmān al-Fārisī "Rūzbeh"
Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (d. 49/669)	Qays ibn Waraqa al-Riyāḥī "Safīna"
Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (d. 61/680)	Rushayd/Rashīd al-Hajarī
ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (d. 49/712)	Abū Khālid al-Kābulī "Kankar"
Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/732)	Yaḥyā ibn Maʿmar al-Thumālī
Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765)	Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Juʿfī
Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799)	Abū ʾl-Khaṭṭāb al-Kāhilī
ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818)	Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar al-Juʿfī
Muḥammad al-Jawād (d. 220/835)	Muḥammad ibn Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar
ʿAlī al-Hādī (d. 254/868)	ʿUmar ibn al-Furāt "al-Kātib"
Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d.260/874)	Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Numayrī
Muḥammad al-Mahdī	--

[1] Based on several sources, mainly: *RR*, p. 55; *FRR*, pp. 89–90; *MA*, p. 159; *TDN*, pp. 207–209; *BS*, pp. 13–14; Halm, *al-Ghunūṣiyya fī ʾl-Islām*, pp. 213–214.

APPENDIX 6

DĪWĀN AL-KHAṢĪBĪ—INFORMATION AND SUMMARY

The following is a list of the poems in the *Dīwān al-Khaṣībī* appearing in other Nuṣayrī sources, divided into three levels of reliability. The location of each *qaṣīda* in other sources and its main topics are given. The aim is to be able to distinguish between the original poems of al-Khaṣībī and the later poems attributed to him. It is important to note that all the citations from Khasībī's poems were located in the version of the *Dīwān* from Ms. Manchester Arab 452 a (see Appendix 1) and the list is based on it. The Damascus version, Ẓāhiriyya, Arab 247 and 3629, based on S. Ḥabib's book, is abbreviated as S. H.

All the reliable poems appear in the first part of *Dīwān al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī* and only one in *Dīwān al-gharīb* (see below, item 14). The rest of *Dīwān al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī* (fol. 12a+b, 18b–20b, 24a–28a, 31b–33b, 37a+b, 67b–83b) and *Dīwān al-gharīb* (fol. 89a–121a), including the low credibility poems, seem to be part of a pseudographic compilation that was added to the original corpus of al-Khaṣībī.

High reliability (cited by himself or his disciples, 10th–11th centuries)

1. *Bāb al-hidāya* (The Gate of Guidance; *DKH* fol. 5a–8b, 81 lines [S.H.: pp. 25–30, 81 lines], rhyme *adī*). Cited in: *MA*, p. 108 (*DKH* 5a, lines 1–3); *RR*, p. 39 (*DKH* fol. 6a, lines 19–22), *RMHM*, p. 185–186, 189 (*DKH*, fol. 5b, lines 12, 14, 15–17); *MN*, fol. 103b (*DKH*, fol. 6a, line 25).
Main issues: The unity of the divine triad, God's transcendence and abstraction, His appearance to all cultures, the *ahl al-marātib*, transmigration of souls as punishment, praise to the "true Shīʿīs".

2. *Inna yawm al-Ghadīr yawm surūr/ al-Ghadīriyya* (The Day of Ghadīr is a Day of Joy; *DKH* fol. 9a–12a, 70 lines [S.H.: pp. 31–35, 62 lines], rhyme *īrī/ ūrī*). Cited in: *MA*, p. 56–59 (cites the complete poem, 70 lines); *MN*, fol. 127a (*DKH*, fol. 10b, line 35); *BS*, p. 48 (*DKH* fol. 9a lines 1–3).

Main issues: The mystical meaning of the events of Ghadīr, the sin of denial and the punishment of transmigration of souls, Docetism of Jesus and Ḥusayn.

3. *ʿAjīb min umūr banī Rasūl Allāh* (One of the Wonderful Things of the Messenger of God's Descendants; *DKH* fol. 12b–16b, 90 lines [S.H.: pp. 38–44, 90 lines], rhyme *anī*). Cited in: *RMHM*, pp. 186–188 (*DKH* fol. 15a+b, 16a+b, lines 56–57, 59–61, 64–66, 68, 79–80, 84 and one line missing in *DKH* and S.H.); *RIA*, p. 294, 301, 302 (*DKH*, fol.12a+b, 13b, 14a, lines 4–7, 17–18, 29–34).
Main issues: Prayer for blessing members of the sect and saving them as in Noah's Ark, prayer for punishment of sinners who deny the divinity of *amīr al-naḥl*.

4. *Bukhtu bi-sirrī* (I Revealed My Secret; fol. 16b–18b, 41 lines [S.H.: pp. 45–48, 41 lines], rhyme *īnī/ūnī*).Cited in: *MA*, p. 176 (*DKH* fol. 16b, 18a, lines 1, 18–21).
Main issues: Al-Khaṣībī attacks those who cursed him after revealing the mystic doctrine and declares his belief in *amīr al-naḥl*. He mentions his accusation of Shīʿism and his imprisonment and attacks the *nāṣiba*.

5. *Yā surra marrā* (=*surra man raʾa*, Oh Samarra; fol. 21a–24a, 70 lines [S.H.: pp. 53–57, 70 lines], rhyme *anā*). Cited in: *RIA*, p. 294, 302 (*DKH*, fol. 23a+b, lines 49, 52–55, 61–63).
Main issues: Praise of Samarra and the two tombs (of ʿAlī al-Hādī and Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī), a demand thhat the open aspect of the pillars of Islam should not be neglected, the creatures in the world of light, critics of the deficient Shīʿīs.

6. *Salām ʿalā arḍ al-Ḥusayn* (Peace Upon the Ground of Ḥusayn; *DKH* fol. 28a–29b, 35 lines [S.H.: pp. 65–67, 34 lines], rhyme *atihi*). Cited in: *MA*, p. 108 (*DKH* fol. 28a, lines 1, 5–6) and in *MA* pp. 111–113 (the complete poem, 35 lines); *BS*, p. 48 (*DKH* fol. 31b, lines 38–40).
Main issues: Praise of Karbalāʾ, the Docetism of Ḥusayn.

7. *Ayyuhā ʾl-zāʾirūna mashhad nūrī* (Oh Pilgrims to the Tomb of My Light; *DKH* fol. 29b–31b, 40 lines [S.H.: pp. 68–70, 40 lines], rhyme *īrī/ūrī*). Cited in: *MA*, pp. 113–115 (complete poem, 40 lines).
Main issues: Praise of the pilgrims of the tomb of Ḥusayn, the Docetism concerning him.

8. *ʿAlat qibāb lakum hudātī* (Exalted Are the Time Circles Which Are My Guides For You; *DKH* fol. 33b–36b, 68 lines [S.H.: pp. 71–75, 67 lines], rhyme *ātī*). Cited in *RMHM*, pp. 181, 184, 185, 190–191 (*DKH*, fol. 33b, 34a, 35b, 36b, lines 1,3, 5,7, 8, 10–13, 49–52, 50–52, 65–66. The version of *RMHM* is arranged in a different order).

Main issues: Praise of Kufa and Samarra, the *tafwīd* passing through the twelve Imāms, anti-feminism, curse of the devil.

9. *Wa-bākī yabkī ʿalā Rabbihī* (Many[1] [Believers] Are Mourning Their Lord; *DKH* fol. 37b–38a, 13 lines [S.H.: pp. 78–79, 13 lines], rhyme *bihi*). Cited in: *MA*, pp. 110–111 (complete poem, 13 lines).

Main Issues: Al-Khaṣībī demands that Ḥusayn should not be mourned for neglecting him because he was not killed in reality (Docetism).

10. *Allāh akbar akbar Allāh* (God is the greatest, Greatest is God; *DKH* fol. 44b–47a, 43 lines [S.H.: pp. 80–83, 43 lines], rhyme *āʾ*). Cited in: *RMHM*, p. 192 (*DKH*, fol. 45a, lines 1–2 with a different beginning *Allāh Akbar Allāh Akbar*).

Main issues: Praise of the *ism*, the *maʿnā* and the *bāb*, creators of the world of light, the transmigration of sinners.

11. *Saʾimtu ʾl-muqām bi-arḍ al-Shām* (I Hated Living in the Land of Syria; *DKH* fol. 46b–50b, 67 lines [S.H.: pp. 97–101, 67 lines], rhyme *ām*). Cited in: *MA*, pp. 177 (*DKH* fol. 46b, 48b–49a, lines 1, 34–36); *BS*, p. 16 (*DKH* fol. 46b, line 1).

Main issues: Curse of Syria, the land of the Umayyads, praise of Kufa, transmigration of sinners, praises to Salmān, curse of heretic groups.

12. *Akālīl qudus* (Crowns of Sanctity; *DKH* fol. 56a–64b, 186 lines [S.H.: pp. 109–116, 124 lines], the only *qaṣīda* in *rajaz* tempo with shifting rhymes).

Main issues: Astral elements compared to the prophets and Imāms, praise of the twelve Imāms and of the Islamic religion, curse of all evil in history from Pharaoh to the Umayyads, curse of heretical groups.

13. *al-Māʾ shakhṣ jalīl* (Water is A Noble Saint; *DKH* fol. 64b–67b, 58 lines [S.H.: pp. 117–120, 58 lines the last line is different], rhyme *īl/ūl*). Cited in *FRR*, pp. 92–94, 47 lines (complete poem missing the last line, *DKH* fol. 67b, line 48); RA, p. 325 (*DKH*, fol. 65, lines 4–5).

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[1] The opening *wa* should be understand here as *wa rubba* (*wa* of plural).

Main issues: Water, the source of life, is compared to the five *ahl al-kisāʾ*, allegorical interpretations of the pillars of Islam, the eighty transmigrations of the believers.

14. *Asmāʾ sabʿa* (Seven Names; *DKH* fol. 73b–74, 12 lines, rhyme *mā*). Cited in *FRR*, pp. 95 (complete poem, 12 lines); *MN*, 131a (*DKH*, fol. 73b, line 1).
Main issues: Praise of seven sacred names, which represent the seven stations of exaltation as well as the seven levels of transmigration.

15. *Hābīl yā mawlāya* (Habel My Master; *DKH*, fol. 74b–75a, 14 lines, rhyme *ātī*). Cited in *FRR*, pp. 101–102 (complete poem, 14 lines).
Main issues: Praise of certain prophets and saints from Adam to Ibn Nuṣayr, including some Persian legendary persons, curse of the deficient Shīʿīs.

16. *Nawrūz ḥaqq mustafīd* (*Nawrūz Is a Useful Right/Truth*: *DKH*, fol. 103b, 6 lines [S.H.: pp. 181–182, 5 lines], rhyme *im*). Cited in: *MA*, p. 208–209 (complete poem, 6 lines).
Main issues: The mystical meaning of Nawrūz (New Year), which represents God's appearance to the Persians before his appearance to the Arabs, in a previous cycle of time; recommendation to drink wine on this day, which represents the light of Salmān.

17. *A-yaṣḥu fuʾādī* (Will My Heart Become Clever; *DKH*, fol. 112a–113a, 19 lines [S.H.: pp. 195–196, 19 lines], rhyme *īm/ūm*). Cited in: *RIA*, p. 297 (*DKH*, fol. 113, line 19).
Main issues: Al-Khaṣībī's suffering during his imprisonment, his affection for ʿAlī was the reason for his arrest.

Middle reliability (cited only in the 12th century)

18. *Alā yā maʿshar al-Shīʿa* (Oh, Community of the Shīʿa; *DKH* fol. 38a–45a, 149 lines [S.H.: pp. 84–93, 153 lines], rhyme *ātī*). Cited in: *MN*, fol. 126b (*DKH*, fol. 39b–40a, lines 35–36).
Main issues: Only the lights who fell from heaven (the Nuṣayrīs) can understand the true religion and the secret that will be revealed on the Day of Judgment, the *ahl al-marātib*, attack against heretical groups.

19. *Ilā Allāh ilā Allāh tawassaltu* (To God, To God I Plead; *DKH* fol. 50b–55b, 104 lines [S.H.: appears as *Min Allāh ilā Allāh tawassaltu*, pp. 102–108, 103 lines], rhyme *ātī*). Cited in: MN, fol. 127a+b (*DKH*, fol. 54a+b, lines 73–75).
Main issues: Apocalyptic vision of the war at the end of time between good and evil, the sin of denial and the punishment of transmigration, curse against heretical groups.

Low reliability (cited only in the 19th century)

20. *Kullumā nābanī nin al-dahr khaṭb* (Every Time Calamity Happens To Me; *DKH* fol. 77b–78a, 4 lines [does not appear in S.H.], rhyme *āmī*). Cited in *BS*, p. 52 (Complete poem, 4 lines).
Main issues: A prayer to Jaʿfar as the personification of the *maʿnā* and other Imāms, who are personifications of the *ism*, to be saved from calamities.

21. *Yā ẓāhir lam taghīb* ʿAnnā [*sic*, for *taghib*], (Oh, You Present Who Is Never Absent from us; *DKH* fol. 83a, 4 lines [S.H.: p. 148, 4 lines], rhyme *dan*). Cited in: *BS*, p. 51 (complete poem, 4 lines).
Main issues: An aspect of the divinity, personified by Salmān, is accessible only to the believers, a prayer for God's mercy.

22. *Qāla lī fī 'l-manām ab shafīq* (A Merciful Father Told Me in My Sleep; *DKH* fol. 113a, 7 lines [S.H.: p. 196, 7 lines], rhyme *īq*/*ūq*). Cited in: *BS*, p. 16 (fol. 113a, lines 1–2).
Main issues: Al-Khaṣībī's mysterious release from jail by "a merciful father" because of the *ḥijāb*'s affection for him.

23. *Minka badā ẓāhir al-ṣifāt* (From You a Visible Form Was Created; *DKH* fol. 119b–120a, 4 lines [S.H.: p. 149, 4 lines], rhyme *ātī*). Cited in: *BS*, pp. 51–52 (complete poem, 4 lines).
Main issues: Definition of God as the one without any form or boundary, the object of all prayers.

None of the rest of the poems in the *Dīwān* are cited in any of the available sources of the sect. To sum up, from the 99 poems (42 in *Dīwān al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī* and 57 in *Dīwān al-Gharīb*) only 17 poems are reliable, 3 may be reliable and the other 79 are

anonymous. Some of the latter match the style of Khaṣībī, but most of them display a lower level of both language and literary style. This study of the *Dīwān* should be the main tool for a critical edition of the text in the future. Such an edition should include the original Damascus-Ẓāhiriyya copy.

APPENDIX 7

A SUMMARY OF THE *KITĀB AL-MAJMŪʿ*: *A DUSTŪR* (BOOK FOR INITIATES) FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY[1]

Chapter 1 (pp. 7–9), *al-Awwal* (the first): Blessing of ʿAlī; a prayer transmitted from Ibn Nuṣayr to Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn to save believers from calamities; blessing for al-Khaṣībī "knowing the divine knowledge" (*al-ʿārif bi-maʿrifat Allāh*).

Chapter 2 (pp. 10–11), *Taqdīsat ibn al-Walī* (sanctification of the son/disciple of the master): Blessing of ʿAlī; a mystical vision of the world of light seen by a believer during his sleep; prayer to be saved from the seven degrees of transmigration; "this is the secret of the master al-Jillī, son [disciple] of the master [al-Khaṣībī]".

Chapter 3 (pp. 11–12), *Taqdīsat ibn Saʿīd* (sanctification of ibn Saʿīd, i.e. al-Ṭabarānī): Blessing of ʿAlī, the five *aytām*, the twelve Imāms and their *bāb*s; prayer to be saved from the material world by the blessing of al-Ṭabarānī; a curse against his enemy Abū Dhuhayba (leader of the Isḥāqiyya).

Chapter 4 (pp. 14–16), *al-Nisba* (the lineage): Acknowledgment of *ʿayn-mīm-sīn*; a Nuṣayrī *shahāda* of the divine triad; a chain of transmitters of this secret going back to the founders of the sect (al-Ṭabarānī is replaced by a certain Aḥmad al-Ṭarrāz [the embroiderer] as the disciple of al-Jillī), and finally to Ibn Nuṣayr the *bāb* of the divine Imām Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī.

Chapter 5 (pp. 18–19), *al-Fatḥ* (victory): Acknowledgment that ʿAlī is the creator of this world and that the *ism*, the *bāb* and the *aytām*

[1] Based on the original version published in Sulaymān al-Adhanī's *al-Bākūra al-Sulaymāniyya*; see *BS*, pp. 7–33. See a complete translation of *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* into French, with useful commentaries, in Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, Appendix, pp. 161–179.

were created from his light; a prayer for victory over the enemies of the sect.

Chapter 6 (pp. 20–21), *al-Sujūd* (worship): Repetition of the declaration *Allāhu akbar* (God is the greatest) three times; declaration of worship of the one abstract God; citing of the *Āyat al-nūr* (verse of light in the Qurʾān).

Chapter 7 (pp. 21–22), *al-Salām* (peace/blessing): Self-definition of the believer as a Muslim; blessing of the triad and the *ahl al-marātib*.

Chapter 8 (pp. 23–24), *al-Ishāra* (the indication): Muḥammad indicates to ʿAlī in Ghadīr Khumm that he is God, the duty to celebrate that day.

Chapter 9 (p. 25), al-ʿAyn al-ʿAlawiyya (the heavenly eye/letter *ʿayn*): Declaration of belief in the triad and the secret of *ʿayn-mīm-sīn*.

Chapter 10 (pp. 25–26), *al-ʿAqd* (the connection): Acknowledgment of God, who is the truth, and of the water circling his throne in heaven.

Chapter 11 (pp. 26–27), *al-Shahāda* (declaration of belief): A *shahāda* including the declaration of Islam as God's religion, the belief in the three aspects of the divine triad and in the five *aytām*; a self-definition as possessing Ibn Nuṣayr's religion (*dīn*), Muḥammad ibn Jundab's opinion (*raʾy*), Jannān al-Junbulānī's path (*ṭarīqa*), al-Khaṣībī's theology (*madhhab*),[2] al-Jillī's belief (*maqāl*), and al-Tabarānī's law (*fiqh*).

Chapter 12 (p. 28), *al-Imāmiyya*: Acknowledgment of the eternal and abstract nature of the divine Imām.

Chapter 13 (p. 29), *al-Musāfara* (the journey): Blessing of God and the 51 disciples of al-Khaṣībī in Ḥarrān; cursing of their enemies.

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[2] Compare with *MN*, fol. 75: Ibn Nuṣayr's theology (*madhhab*) and al-Khaṣībī's belief (*maqāl*).

Chapter 14 (p. 30), *al-Bayt al-maʿmūr* (the house to which pilgrimage is made): Mystical meaning of the Kaʿba, formed from *ashkhāṣ* from the world of light.

Chapter 15 (p. 32), *al-Ḥijābiyya*: Blessing of the *ḥijab* and his *bāb*, for the *aytām* and the stars (which are the *ahl al-marātib*).

Chapter 16 (pp. 32–33), *al-Naqībiyya*: Blessing of the *nuqabāʾ*, Muḥammad ibn Sinān in particular.

APPENDIX 8

THE *FATWĀ* OF IBN TAYMIYYA AGAINST THE NUṢAYRĪS

The following is the translation of the anonymous question concerning the Nuṣayrīs and the answer of Ibn Taymiyya, based on the Arabic version published by St. Guyard at the end of the nineteenth century.[1] This document is the only *fatwā* issued in the Middle Ages dealing with the Nuṣayrīs, except for two much shorter *fatwā*s issued by the same scholar that are dealt with in Chapter 3.

(a)
istiftāʾ

What is the view of the noble scholars, the religious leaders, concerning the Nuṣayriyya, may Allāh forgive them? How could they help to unveil the clear truth and oppress the owners of lie, concerning the Nuṣayriyya, who believe in the permissibility of wine, in the transmigration of souls, in the eternity of the world and the denial of the resurrection of the dead and [the existence of] heaven and hell. [They believe] that the five prayers represent five names which are ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, Muḥsin and Fāṭima, that the mentioning of these five releases them from the cleaning from impurity and from the rest of the obligations of prayer.

[They believe] that the fast represents for them the names of thirty men and thirty women counted in their books, which this paper is too short to include. [They believe] that the one who created the heaven and earth is ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, may Allāh be satisfied with him, who is for them the divinity in heaven and the Imām on earth. They maintain that the logic of the appearance of the divinity in this human form is that he makes himself present among his creatures [*yuʾnisu ḥalqahū*][2] and his worshippers in order to teach them how to worship him.

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[1] M. St. Guyard, "Le fatwa d'Ibn Taymiyya sur les Nosairis, publié pour la première fois avec une traduction nouvelle", *Journal asiatique* (sixième série) 18 (1871), pp. 158–198.

[2] The verb *ānasa* (from the root a.n.s., meaning to be on intimate terms with someone) seems to be taken from an original Nuṣayrī source. It was used to determine a kind

[They believe] that a Nuṣayrī does not become a believing Nuṣayrī, with whom they share the table and drink, and whom they initiate into their secrets and marry to their women, before he performs the *khiṭāb* [speech, see details in the discussion of initiation] by their master, which is in fact [the religious ceremony] that they swear to him [the master] to keep secret [*kitmān*] their religion and the knowledge of his [the master's] shaykhs and that of the most respectable people of his doctrine. [They swear to him] not to consult a Muslim or any other person but only someone of their own religion. [They swear to him] to own an esoteric knowledge of his Imām and his God in the cycles of time [*al-akwār wa-'l-adwār*) and will know the transition[3] of the *ism* and the *maʿnā* in every time and period. The *ism* among the first men was [in] Adam and the *maʿnā* in Seth, then [the transition was that] the *ism* was Jacob and the *maʿnā* was Joseph. Their proof for this material form is their claim that in the holy Qurʾān there is a story about Jacob and Joseph, God's peace upon them, saying concerning Jacob that he was the *ism* because he was unable to surpass his level [to that of the *maʿnā*] and said: "I will ask forgiveness for you from my Lord because he is the greatest forgiver and merciful" [Qurʾān, Yūsuf (12):98]. As to Joseph, he was the adorated *maʿnā* because he said: "there is no blemish on you today" (Qurʾān, Yūsuf [12]:92) a phrase that cannot be attributed to anyone but him, because he knows that he is the divinity who acts according to his own will. Then [the transition was that] Moses was the *ism* and Joshua was the *maʿnā*.

They believe that the sun turned back [to the east][4] to Joshua because he ordered it to do so and it obeyed him, and would the sun return at [the order of anyone] else but God? Then they consider Solomon as the *ism* and Āṣaf[5] as the *maʿnā*, owner of the power, and they count

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of appearance which is not *ḥulūl* (incarnation). The *īnās* is explained in Mufaḍḍal's *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ* as a case when a mystic invites the presence of a person (*shakhṣ*) from the world of light. The latter wears the form of his host and can speak with him. Oddly enough, the *shakhṣ* in the situation of *īnās* is even capable of eating and drinking with his host as if he were actually human. See *KS*, fol. 100a, b.

[3] The term used here is *intiqāl*, instead of the Nuṣayrī original term *siyāqa*.

[4] See Joshua's request that the sun stop, Joshua 10:12.

[5] Āṣaf ibn Barakhyā is known in Muslim tradition as the minister of King Solomon, who possessed mystical knowledge. See J. Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and* Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 106–108. This tradition seems to be based on the Hebrew Asaph son of Berachiah from II Chronicles, 20:14; Psalms, 50, 73–83. However, this person was not found in any of the available Nuṣayrī sources.

all the prophets and messengers one after the other in that way, to the time of the messenger of God, God's prayer and peace upon him, claiming that Muḥammad is the *ism* and that ʿAlī is the *maʿnā* and they continue to count in this order in every time until our period [that of the cited Nuṣayrī source?].

A part of the truth of the *khiṭāb* and their religion is the grasping that ʿAlī is the Lord (*rabb*), Muḥammad is the veil (*ḥijāb*) and Salmān is the door (*bāb*) and this is based on a eternal order, and a well known poem by a damned member of their dignitaries says:

> I testify that there is no other God but ʿAlī the transcendent the esoteric,
> and there is no veil but Muḥammad the righteous the faithful,
> and there is no path to him but Salmān the powerful.

In addition [in their religion] there are the five *aytām* [orphans] and the twelve leaders *nuqabāʾ* [sing. *naqīb*, leader) and their names are known to them and in their evil books these three permanently appear in every period of time to eternity. [In their religion] Iblīs al-Abālisa [the king of the devils] is ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and below him in the rank of the devils is Abū Bakr and then ʿUthmān, may God be pleased with them all and purify and exalt their rank from the claims of those non-believers and the inventions of the corrupted extremists [*ghālīn*, meaning Ghulāt].

In every period there is a group of people who mention their corrupted doctrines as well as details of these aforementioned principles, and this damned order [*ṭarīqa*, a Ṣūfī term] took control of a big part of the land of Syria [al-Shām]. They [the Nuṣayrīs] are known and famous, they perform this doctrine openly and everyone from the intelligent Muslims, the scholars as well as the ordinary people who lived among them and got to know them, confirmed it in our period. That is because their situation was veiled from most of the people in the time of the conquest of the Crusaders who were fortified/defeated[6] in the coastal land. When the day of Islam['s conquest] came their situation was unveiled and their heresy was exposed but there is an enormous negligence [in the treatment] of their matter although this situation [enables the Muslims to reveal their heresy].

[6] It may be assumed that the word *maḥdūlīn* (exploited) here was corruptly copied from the original *majdūlīn* (fortified), which is more logical in this context. The version appearing in both the *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā,* (vol. 35, p. 148) and the *Fatāwā al-kubrā* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1966, vol. 4, p. 248), where the verb is *maḥdūlīn* (defeated) is also acceptable.

[For example] what is the judgment concerning the cheeses that are prepared with the rennet of their slaughtered beasts? And also, what about [the use of] their tools and garments? Is it permitted to bury them among the Muslims or not? Is it permitted to let them take [the Muslims'] place in the frontier positions of the Muslim [army] and to leave it to them, or not? Is the person in authority permitted to ban them and to use others from the Muslim administrators? Would he be to blame if he were to start to send them away and use others in their place? Or is he allowed to suspend [their removal] although his decision is to do so? Whether he uses them, then removes them or does not remove them, is it permitted to spend the money of the treasury on them? And if the person in charge were to pay to some of them a part of the salary later than the fixed date in order to pay the salary of another Muslim who deserves it or who would be satisfied by it–would it be authorized to keep it that way or is it his duty [to pay the Nuṣayrī fighter on time]?

Is it permitted to kill the above-mentioned Nuṣayrīs and to confiscate their property, or not? If the commander, may the exalted God support him, were to fight a holy war to oppress their heresy and remove them from the fortresses of the Muslims and the Muslim people were to refrain from marrying them and eating their slaughtered meat and were he to order them to fast [in Ramadan] and to pray [the orthodox prayers] and were he to prevent them from maintaining openly their heretic religion in order to make them understand their heresy–is this better and more rewarding than preparing the war against the armies of the Mongols in their territory [that of the Nuṣayrīs] and the attack of the Chinese territory, and that of Zanj [Africa], or is this [oppressing the Nuṣayrīs] better? Can a Nuṣayrī holy fighter be considered a *murābiṭ* [pl. *murābiṭūn*, a frontier defender] and should he be rewarded as a *murābiṭ* in the border towns by the sea preventing the invasion of the Franks [Crusaders], or is this [oppressing them] more rewarding? Is it obligatory for someone who knows the doctrine of the mentioned [Nuṣayrīs] to publish their matter and to help eliminating their heresy and spread Islam among them? Then maybe God may turn their descendants and their sons into Muslims, or is it permitted to him to overlook and ignore [their heretic doctrine]? What is the reward of someone who strives for it [revealing the Nuṣayrī doctrine and oppressing them]? And that of the fighter and the *murābiṭ* who persist in it? Please answer as simply [as possible] and we will be grateful and thankful.

fatwā

These people called Nuṣayriyya, they and the other kinds of Qarmaṭians, the Bāṭinīs, are more heretical than the Jews and the Christians and even more than several heterodox groups. Their damage to the [Muslim] community of [the Prophet] Muḥammad, may God pray for him and bless him, is greater than the damage of the infidels who fight [against the Muslims], such as the heretical Mongols, the Crusaders and others, since they [Nuṣayrīs and other Bāṭinīs] are pretending before the uneducated Muslims that they are Shīʿīs and loyal to the *ahl al-bayt* [people of the house] but in reality they do not believe in God, in his messenger, in his holy book, in obligation or prohibition, [they do not believe] in reward and punishment, in paradise and hell, or in any of the messengers prior to Muḥammad, may God pray for him and bless him, or in one of the previous religions [prior to Islam]. They rather use the words of God and his messenger that are known to the Muslim scholars, and would give them allegorical interpretation based on matters they invent and call them the esoterical sciences.

They do not have any limit to their heretical claims concerning the names of the exalted God and his [Qurʾānic] verses, as well as to the falsification of the words of God and his messenger from their original signification. This is a result of their goal of denying the belief and the laws of Islam in any possible way, pretending that their claims are based on truths [only] they know. They have well-known struggles as well as [polemical] books against Islam and the Muslims. When they have an opportunity they shed the blood of the Muslims, such as their murder of the pilgrims and throwing their bodies into the Zamzam well on one occasion, and the stealing of the black stone of the Kaʿba and keeping it for some time on another occasion. They killed Muslim scholars and shaykhs, a number that only the exalted God can count.

The Muslim scholars wrote books unveiling their secrets and exposing their mysteries and explained in them their situation of heresy and their heterodoxy, which is more severe than that of the Jews and the Christians and [even] of the Brahmans[7] of India who worship idols. It is well known about them that the Syrian coasts were conquered by the Christians from their [lands'] direction since they are always hostile to

[7] See concerning this group in India, S. Stroumsa, "The Barāhima in early kalām", *JSAI* 6 (1985), pp. 229–241.

the Muslims, with the Christians against the Muslims. And the most severe calamity for them is the victory of Islam against the Mongols and the Muslims' conquest of the coastland and the submission of the Christians. Their greatest celebrations are when, God forbid, the Christians take over the border villages of the Muslims. Indeed, the border villages remained in the hands of the Muslims, even the island of Cyprus that was conquered at [the time of] the caliphate of commander of the faithful ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, by Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān until the fourth[tenth] century. These objectors to God and his messengers became numerous in that time in the coastlands and other places and as a result the Christians conquered the coastland, then Jerusalem and other places. It is their conduct which was the main reason for this [conquest]. Then when God sent the Muslim kings, such as Nūr al-Dīn the *shahīd* and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and those who followed them, and they conquered the coastlands [and took them] from the Christians and other lands taken by them, as well as Egypt, where they [the Bāṭinīs] ruled for around two centuries. They [the Bāṭinīs] and the Christians cooperated in fighting the Muslims until they conquered the land. From that time, the Muslim propaganda spread in Egypt and Syria. But then the Mongols invaded the Muslim territories and murdered the caliph in Baghdad and other Muslim kings using their help. Indeed it is the astronomer of the Mongol leader, his minister al-Naṣīr al-Ṭūsī in Alamūt [center of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs in Persia], who demanded the execution of the caliph under their rule.

They have names that are well known to the Muslims: sometimes they are called Malāḥida, sometimes Ismāʿīliyya, sometimes Qarāmiṭa, sometimes Bāṭiniyya, sometimes Khurramiyya and sometimes Muḥammara. Some of these names concern them all and some only a group of them, such as the name Islam and beliefs concerning all the Muslims, and some Muslim groups have a specific name according to their lineage, their territory or another component. Interpreting their goals would be a long task, as the scholars said concerning them: the open aspect of their religion is opposition [*rafḍ*, a nickname for Shīʿism] and its concealed aspect is absolute heresy and the truth concerning their matter is that they do not believe in any of the prophets and the messengers, not in Noah, not in Abraham, not in Moses, not in Jesus or Muḥammad. They do not believe in any of the revealed holy books, not in the Bible, not in the Evangelical Gospels or the Qurʾān. They do not believe that this world has a creator that created it, or that there is a religion that he ordered be followed, or that he

has a world where he rewards and punishes people for their acts other than this world.

In some cases they base their belief on the doctrines of the naturalist and theist philosophers, as did the owners of the Epistles of the Brothers of Wisdom, and in other cases on the philosophers with inclination to the Persian heretics and objectors who worship and sacrifice to the ox. As proof for their belief, they use the words of the prophecies based on an expression which they corrupt and turn into a tradition that they attribute to the Prophet, may God pray for him and bless him, who said: "The first thing God created is the intellect, then he told him: Come! and he came; then he told him to go and he went". They corrupt his words and claim that the first thing he created was the intellect to adjust it to the words of the philosophers and followers of Aristotle, that the first emanation from necessary being is the intellect. In other [cases they base their argument] on a reliable expression of the Prophet which they corrupt from its original meaning as do the owners of the Epistles of the Brothers of Wisdom, the theists and their kind of people, and [along the way] many of their lies penetrated [the beliefs of] many Muslims and influenced them, to the extent that in their books it [their doctrine] turned into a path for people who are related to knowledge and religion. Even though the latter do not agree with the heretical beliefs of the former, they still reveal their damned propaganda, which they call "the quiet propaganda" and which contains several levels called "the Edge of the Highest Initiation"[8] and the "most exalted law". They include in their "Highest Initiation" the denial of the Creator and show scorn towards him and those who are close to him, to the extent that one of them would write the name of the Almighty God at the bottom of his leg. This book also contains the denial of his laws and his religion and the denial of all the prophets, as well as the claim that they are of their kind [as the angels] seeking for leadership. Some of them excelled in seeking leadership, and some failed and even died. They consider Muḥammad, may God pray for him and bless him, and Moses, peace upon him from the first category [who succeeded] and Jesus from the second [who failed and died]. It [the book]) contains scorn for prayer, alms giving, fasting and

[8] Concerning the forgery of this book and its association with the Ismāʿīlīs, see Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. M. Bonner (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 16.

pilgrimage, and permits prohibited intercourse and the scorn of other obligations, which are too numerous to mention.

They have signs and [forms of] speech that enable them to recognize each other, so that if they are situated in a Muslim territory in which there are many believers they veil their identity from those who do not know them.

All the Muslim scholars agreed concerning such people that it is forbidden to marry them, nor can a Muslim marry one of them who is under his control or a free woman. The meat that they slaughter is prohibited. As to their cheeses, their rennet is a matter of controversy between two famous points of view, that it is like the rennet of carrion and that it is like the meat of the Persians and the rennet of the Crusaders of whom it is said that they do not purify their meat. As to the view of Abū Ḥanīfa and Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal], both agree that this cheese is permitted because the rennet of the carrion is pure, because of the belief that the rennet does not die with the death of the slaughtered beast and the use of the internal parts of an impure beast is not impure. Shāfiʿī and Mālik, as well as Aḥmad in another tradition, claim that this cheese is impure since the rennet of these people is impure, because the milk, the meat and the rennet are impure. It is the kind of meat that is forbidden to consume because it is like carrion. The holders of the two points of view both base their claim on traditions transmitted from the Companions. The former cite traditions that they [the Companions of the Prophet] have eaten from the cheese of the Persians, and the latter claimed that they have eaten only chosen cheeses from the Christians. This is [still] an issue of controversy and one should choose which tradition to follow.

As to their tools and their clothes they are like those of the Persians, which the great reliable scholars say cannot be used before being washed, since their meat is impure and that probably touched their tools to make them impure as well. The exceptions are tools which logically would not touch impure things and do not need to be washed. [Even] ʿUmar [the caliph] purified himself from his Christian slave woman, so there is no doubt about his impurity [since he touched her].

It is prohibited to bury them in Muslim graveyards or to pray for one of them who died because God forbade prayer for *munāfiqīna* [hypocrites] such as ʿAbdallāh ibn Ubayy and his kind, who openly prayed, gave alms, fasted and fought *jihād* with the Muslims and did not reveal doctrines which contradict the religion of Islam, but concealed them. In this context Allāh said: "You must not pray for any-

one of them who died or visit his grave" [Qurʾān, al-Tawba (9):84], let alone those who are part of the heresy, hypocrisy and are openly infidels.

The use of such people in the border villages of the Muslims or their fortresses and army is a great sin and is like using wolves to pasture sheep, since they are the most seditious people towards the Muslims and their commanders and the most eager to destroy the [Muslim] religion and the regime. They are the most eager people to open the border camps to the enemies of the Muslims, so those responsible must remove them from the lists of the soldiers either for a raid or another war. It is not permitted to delay this matter even though he [the commander] has the ability to do it, unless they are used for [unarmed] work, and if they do it according to the agreement with them it is permitted. As to their salary, it should be paid to them on time because it was agreed upon with them. If the agreement is legal so the payment on time is an obligation even if he is heretic, and also if their employment is not on a salary basis but as in work in the field, which is permitted to them.

Nevertheless, their life and possessions are permitted [to be taken]. If they show regret there is a debate between the scholars whether to accept it. Those who accept their repentance if they accept the laws of Islam will agree to leave them their possessions. Those who reject their regret and refuse [to confiscate] the heritage of these kind of people, [judged that] it should be transferred to the spoils in the treasury. The reason [for the rejection] is that when those people are arrested they pretend to possess the opposite of their ridiculous religion and veil their true belief. And among the Muslims there are some who do not know, so they must be warned against them. They [the heretics] must not be authorized to gather or to carry weapons. If they are from the fighting soldiers and follow the laws of Islam, such as the five prayers, and the reading of the Qurʾān, those should be left with scholars who will teach them the Muslim religion and stay between them and their commander. [Also] Abū Bakr the rightful, may God be pleased from him, and the rest of the Companions, when they won the fight against the rebels and came to him, he told them to choose between the war which brings honor and the peace which brings wages. They asked him: "O Caliph of the messenger of God we are aware of the honoring war but what is the peace which brings wages?" So he replied: "You would be paid ransom for our dead fighter but we would not pay for yours, and you would declare that our dead fighters are in heaven and

yours are in hell. We would gain the spoils we collected from your property and you would be paid ransom for your spoils, we would confiscate from you the land and the weapons and you would not be authorized to ride horses and would be left with the tails of the camels [i.e. less noble animals to ride] until the Caliph of the messenger of God would authorize it to you". The Companions criticized him for this except for the guarantee for the Muslim dead fighters. Then ʿUmar told them: "Those died for the sake of God and would be compensated by God, since they are martyrs they have no ransom" and everybody accepted his claim and this is what the Companions agreed upon and is also the doctrine of the great scholars. There was a controversy among the scholars over this issue and most of them agreed that there is no guarantee for those who are killed by the rebellious apostates and this was their final decision. This is the doctrine of Abū Ḥanīfa and Aḥmad according to one tradition and that of al-Shāfiʿī according to another. This was the first thing agreed upon and followed by the Companions with those apostates after their return to Islam even though their blameworthiness was clear. So they were prevented from riding horses and carrying weapons and could not be authorized to stay in the army, as Jews and Christians are not authorized and are under the authority of the Muslim laws until they reveal their intention [literally: what they do) if they are good or bad. As to those who are the leaders of their corrupted religion and show repentance, they would be separated from them and taken to the Muslim lands where they would be guided [to Islam] or put to death for their betrayal.

There is no doubt that fighting these people and attacking them from the borders is one of the greatest obligations and the rightful [Caliph ʿUmar] and the rest of the Companions began the holy war against the apostates before the war against the heretics from the People of the Book, because fighting them [means] defending Muslim land and no one is authorized to keep secret what he knows about them. On the contrary, he should expose it and unveil them until the Muslims know the truth concerning them. No one is authorized to help them to remain in the army and in other kinds of work. No one has the right to prohibit the execution of an order of God and his messenger concerning them, since this is one of the most important issues [literally: doors] connected with commanding what is good and preventing what is evil and the holy war for God's sake. God told his Prophet: "O Prophet! Fight the holy war against the apostates and the infidels! (Qurʾān, al-Tawba [9]: 73). And according to the two most

reliable traditionists [Bukhārī and Muslim] the Prophet said: "A war camp during day and night for God's sake is better than pilgrimage in the holy months and in the rest of the periods". God said: "Did you consider the watering of the pilgrim and the pilgrimage to the Holy Mosque equal to the belief in God and in the Last Day and fighting for the sake of God is not equal for God, etc.". In his words: "Those who believed and migrated and fought the holy war for the sake of God with their property and soul are in the highest rank for God and they are the winners. God supply them with good news of his mercy and his contentedness [with their acts] and of Paradise for them in which they will remain happy. Remaining for ever there because God's reward is great" (Qurʾān, al-Tawba [9]:19–21).

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